VOLUME 1

SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY

PROLEGOMENA, ON SCRIPTURE, ON FAITH

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Systematic Philosophical Theology

Prolegomena, On Scripture, On Faith

Volume I

William Lane Craig

To Jan, who inspired this monumental project and sustained me throughout

Preface to Volume I

I.

The British divine J. I. Packer opens his wonderful book Knowing God with the following words: “As clowns yearn to play Hamlet, so I have wanted to write a treatise on God.”1 Had Packer wanted to look really foolish, he might have tried writing a systematic theology. I am convinced that such an ambition is impossible for any one person adequately to achieve. Since systematic theology draws upon biblical theology, historical theology, and philosophical theology, among other disciplines, an adequate systematic theology would require expertise in all these areas, which is impossible for anyone to achieve in this lifetime. Ideally, then, a systematic theology would be a collaborative effort, featuring the work of specialists in various areas. But it is dubious that such a joint effort could ever be consistent or harmonious. Though I dabble in biblical and historical theology, I am painfully aware of my shortcomings in those areas. So why should I undertake a project that is destined to fail?

Part of the reason is that contemporary systematic theologies tend overwhelmingly to be philosophically deficient. They are either disguised biblical theologies or dogmatic histories or speculative theologies with little input from the discipline of philosophical theology. As a result their treatment of key doctrines is often

superficial and at best incomplete. Christian doctrine bristles with philosophical questions that are properly the province of the philosopher of religion or philosophical theologian. A systematic theology that focuses on such questions can help to redress the balance. For that reason I have chosen to write a systematic philosophical theology, that is to say, a systematic theology that focuses on the philosophical problems occasioned by Christian doctrine. Such a systematic theology will itself be terribly lopsided, of course, requiring the input, and perhaps correction, of specialists in other disciplines. But by focusing on the philosophical questions that arise in doing systematic theology, I hope to have some excuse for my manifest failings.

II.

My restricted focus occasions a troublesome question: who, exactly, is the intended audience of this book? My intention was to write a systematic philosophical theology that would be of interest not only to philosophers of religion but also to systematic theologians who wanted to become better acquainted with the philosophical issues arising out of Christian theology. So I take pains to explain things clearly as we proceed. But, alas, some of the philosophical discussion becomes necessarily so technical that I fear it will be simply incomprehensible to the average theologian untrained in logic and metaphysics. It is just impossible, try as I might, to explain everything necessary for an understanding of various debates. In the present volume, at least, there is not much of a technical nature in the first two loci to stymie the typical systematic theologian, though his eyes may well glaze over when he comes to the Bayesian analysis of the epistemic justification of belief in the inspiration of Scripture discussed in De Scriptura sacra. Things get much worse when we come to the locus De Deo in volume IIa, which involves very knotty questions. So I suspect that my work will mainly be read

and appreciated by philosophers of religion and analytic theologians, who have the background to understand it.

III.

In the Prolegomena I delineate what I understand systematic theology to involve and how it relates to various theological disciplines. Since I take it to be part of the task of the systematic theologian to articulate a coherent theological viewpoint, it seems to me that philosophical theology, properly understood, is an inherent part of systematic theology. I shall argue that it is analytic philosophy that is most helpful in unfolding the philosophical content of Christian systematic theology. Although some theologians, acquainted with modernist philosophical thought, still distrust analytic philosophy as inimical to theology, there has fortunately been over the last century, as I shall relate, a dramatic shift in the field of philosophy away from its anti-metaphysical bent, bringing with it a renaissance of Christian philosophy in the Anglo–American world that furnishes rich philosophical resources upon which the Christian theologian may profitably draw.

Although I am enthusiastic about the positive contribution made by analytic philosophical theology to systematic theology, I have become conscious in the course of writing this work of what William Wood has called the “deformations” of analytic philosophical theology, that is to say, defects which are corruptions of the very qualities that make the practice good in the first place.2 Wood rightly points out,

Analytic theology also has its characteristic deformations, and they too are tied to its characteristic virtues. Many of analytic theology’s characteristic virtues are also those of analytic philosophy: a concern for linguistic precision, logical rigor, and linear argument, along with a strong commitment to transparent writing. These are genuine virtues,

and they are much needed in theology and the study of religion. But it is also easy to see how the same virtues could become deformed. To a hammer, everything looks like a nail.3

To the philosophical theologian, everything looks like a problem to be analyzed and resolved.

Wood fears that the analytic procedure can lead to a loss of mystery and to superficiality. That, however, is not at all my fear; in fact, easy appeals to mystery are often an excuse for superficiality, whereas the resolution of mysteries may result in deeper understanding and increased awe of God's greatness. I think rather that the deformation endemic to analytic philosophy of religion is sterility and aridity, an overly-intellectualized faith that can result in a heart that is cold toward God.

Ironically, the showcase example that occurs to me is the same one that occurred to Wood: the doctrine of divine simplicity. Wood criticizes Alvin Plantinga for his well-known critique of the doctrine, a critique Wood takes to be wrong-headed because it is based upon a modern understanding of properties that is foreign to the medieval metaphysical framework. This response seems to me unfair to Plantinga. Noting that certain Fathers held God to be identical to his wisdom, goodness, power, and so forth, Plantinga observes that these are properties; but God cannot be a property. If the medieval metaphysicians denied that these are properties, so much the worse for medieval metaphysicians! For these are, in fact, properties. So the critique sticks. Affirming a doctrine as opaque and apparently incoherent as divine simplicity does nothing to make Christian theology deeper, only more obscure.

Contemporary efforts to defend divine simplicity have become increasingly desperate and far-fetched. Bare logical coherence is purchased only at the expense of enormous implausibility. The resultant concept of God is light years away from the living God of the Bible. One philosophical theologian, reflecting on contemporary debates over divine simplicity, remarked to me, "I feel that we're scarcely even doing Christian theology anymore." I think he is right.

The sterile abstraction that takes the place of God in the defenses of divine simplicity is hardly apt to warm the heart and prompt one to draw near to God. Contemporary philosophical theologians writing in defense of divine simplicity are doing no favor at all to Christian theology and spirituality.

Wood rightly urges analytic theologians to “think about God with an attitude of reverence and adoration.”4 Those of us who are engaged in philosophical theology need to examine ourselves to ensure that our faith does not become deformed. We need to be self-consciously engaged in Christian spiritual disciplines like corporate worship, prayer, study of Scripture, fellowship, and evangelization, lest our faith become overly-intellectualized and our hearts become cold.

IV.

It might be wondered whether there are any philosophical distinctives that crucially shape the theology presented in these volumes. As a matter of fact, there are. In the course of writing this work, I have been surprised how often a couple of philosophical convictions surface which decisively affect the shape of my theology. First is my rejection of a metaontological thesis of Quinean provenance, namely, a criterion of ontological commitment according to which we are committed to the reality of the values of variables bound by the existential quantifier and to the referents of singular terms in sentences we take to be true. My repudiation of such a criterion leads me, among other things, to reject the Indispensability Argument for the reality of abstract objects, as we shall see in our discussion of divine aseity. Second is my endorsement of a tensed, as opposed to tenseless, theory of time, according to which both tense and temporal becoming are objective, as opposed to merely subjective, features of reality. My deep conviction that time is tensed leads me to affirm, among other things, that God exists omnitemporally rather than timelessly, as we shall see in our discussion of divine eternity, and that certain realist defenses of the

doctrine of original sin are non-starters, as we shall see in De homine. These two philosophical issues – Quinean metaontology and a tensed vs. tenseless theory of time – are to my knowledge never identified and discussed by other contemporary systematic theologians, and yet they are watershed issues with respect to one's theology, especially one's doctrine of God.

V.

One of the challenges in writing a work like this is deciding how to deal with interlocutors. Traditional dogmatics tends to focus understandably upon the ageless figures of the past, such as the Church Fathers and the medieval and post-Reformation scholastic theologians. While such an approach has the benefit of making one's treatment timeless, it has the decided drawback of failing to profit from the cutting edge work being done in contemporary Christian philosophy. I am convinced that contemporary philosophers have not only advanced far beyond the figures of the past but have in many respects profited from and corrected their mistakes. A systematic theology that ignores contemporary philosophical contributions to the debate will be impoverished as a result.

On the other hand, extensive interaction with contemporary interlocutors is guaranteed to make one's systematic theology soon dated. The sad fact is that most of us will no longer be read or remembered in another generation. Although contemporary philosophers still interact with Gottlob Frege's epochal Grundlagen der Arithmetik (1884), for example, who cares about or any longer reads Frege's interlocutors? Most of us and our interlocutors will be similarly forgotten, threatening our systematic theology with built-in obsolescence. So what to do?

My solution to this problem is to interact principally with the positions and arguments of interlocutors in the text, while reserving personal interaction with specific interlocutors for the footnotes. As a result

one will find fairly extensive footnotes discussing the views of various interlocutors alluded to in the text. This solution has the great benefit of streamlining the main text, so that the reader does not get bogged down in minutiae. I hope that the usefulness of my treatment will thereby be prolonged.

One will find few systematic theologians among my interlocutors in this book. There are two reasons for this relative absence. First, I am not greatly acquainted with the works of systematic theologians. This is embarrassing and represents a shortcoming on my part. But second, to the extent that I am familiar with the works of systematic theologians, I have not found them particularly profitable when it comes to philosophical theology, the focus of this work. This reduces the necessity of and motivation for interacting with them. Instead, what I have chosen to do is take a couple of representative tokens of systematic theologians as my interlocutors. Specifically, I have chosen the Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck, whose knowledge of dogmatics was encyclopedic, as a contemporary representative of the tradition of Protestant scholasticism and my own Doktorvater Wolfhart Pannenberg, perhaps the most rational (and, as we shall see, rationalistic!) of contemporary theologians as a representative of the best of current work in systematic theology. Interacting with them has proved interesting and, I hope, will be helpful.

VI.

Another important decision I have made was to publish the volumes of this work seriatim instead of waiting until the whole was completed. Not only is the future uncertain, but the prospect of revising the whole multi-volume work after (God willing!) its completion is akin to “painting the Forth Bridge”: by the time the task is completed, it will be time to begin anew! On the other hand, releasing the volumes one at a time runs the risk that one may later regret what one has said in earlier volumes. Still, it seems preferrable to get what has been accomplished into print, perhaps

with the possibility of later revision. One oddity of this decision is that cross-references in earlier volumes to later loci refer for a time to nothing.

VII.

I have organized my philosophical theology along the lines of the classic loci communes, or chief topics, of Protestant scholastic theology. This rubric is not only an excellent organizational tool for doing systematic theology but has the additional benefit of relating the philosophical questions explored directly to the relevant theological topic. As an evangelical Protestant, I begin with the locus De Scriptura sacra as the basis of authority in our theologizing (and philosophizing!). Having laid the foundations, we next turn to the locus De fide to explore epistemological questions related to Christian truth claims. Then in volume II we turn to the locus De Deo, which lies at the very heart of Christian theology. This locus alone is so rich in philosophical questions that I can deal only with the coherence of theism (Attributa Dei) in volume IIa and reserve a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity (De Trinitate), along with an Excursus on Natural Theology, for volume IIb. I shall tackle the companion loci De creatione and De homine in volume III. In volume IV I shall, God willing, handle the loci De Christo and De gratia, and conclude our series with De ecclesia and De novissimus in volume V.

VIII.

I am grateful to my wife Jan for inspiring me to undertake this monumental project. I am also thankful to my research assistants Timothy Bayless and Hayden Stephen for their help in procuring materials. I am also indebted to Mr. Bayless for his diligent compiling of the various indices and bibliography and for putting footnotes into

the house style. Acknowledgement of the helpful input from various colleagues will be found at the end of each locus.

Although I draw in this work from many previous publications, I have in every case updated and expanded my earlier discussion. Previous publications relevant to Volume I include: Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview, with J. P. Moreland, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017); “Propositional Truth—Who Needs It?” Philosophia Christi 15 (2013): 355–64; “‘Men Moved By The Holy Spirit Spoke From God’ (2 Peter 1.21): A Middle Knowledge Perspective on Biblical Inspiration,” Philosophia Christi NS 1 (1999): 45–82; Reasonable Faith, 3rd ed. rev. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008); Time and the Metaphysics of Relativity, Philosophical Studies Series 84 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001); Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Theism I: Omniscience, Studies in Intellectual History 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 43–63.

Notes

1 J. I. Packer, Knowing God (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 7.

2 William Wood, Analytic Theology and the Academic Study of Religion, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 45–46.

3 Wood, Analytic Theology, 45.

4 Wood, Analytic Theology, 175.

Prolegomena

Systematic philosophical theologies are rare – at least on the contemporary scene.1 Paul Tillich's Systematic Theology and Wolfhart Pannenberg's Systematic Theology deserve to be called systematic philosophical theologies, heavily shaped as they are by philosophical concerns.2 Unfortunately, neither of these theologians was able to benefit from the renaissance of Christian philosophy that has transpired in Anglo-American analytic philosophy since the late 1960s. Rather Richard Swinburne's tetralogy in philosophical theology, coupled with his trilogy in natural theology, is representative of that tradition and is doubtless the preeminent example of systematic philosophical theology in our day.3 Many other philosophers or theologians have taken steps toward a systematic philosophical theology, even if the scope of such a project makes the goal elusive.4

1 The Renaissance of Christian Philosophy

It is precisely the renaissance of Christian philosophy in our day that makes this so opportune a time for the writing of a systematic philosophical theology.

1.1 A Look Back

In order to understand our current situation, it is helpful to understand something of where we have been. In a personal retrospective, the eminent Princeton University philosopher Paul Benacerraf describes what it was like doing philosophy at Princeton during the 1950s and 1960s. The overwhelmingly dominant mode of thinking was scientific naturalism. Physical science was taken to be the final, and really only, arbiter of truth. Metaphysics had been vanquished, expelled from philosophy like an unclean leper. “The philosophy of science,” says Benacerraf, “was the queen of all the branches” of philosophy, since “it had the tools… to address all the problems.”5 Any problem that could not be addressed by science was simply dismissed as a pseudo-problem. If a question did not have a scientific answer, then it was not a real question – just a pseudo-question masquerading as a real question. Indeed, part of the task of philosophy was to clean up the discipline from the mess that earlier generations had made of it by endlessly struggling with such pseudo-questions. There was thus a certain self-conscious, crusading zeal with which philosophers carried out their task. The reformers, says Benacerraf, “trumpeted the militant affirmation of the new faith… in which the fumbling confusions of our forerunners were to be replaced by the emerging science of philosophy. This new enlightenment would put the old metaphysical views and attitudes to rest and replace them with the new mode of doing philosophy.”6

What Benacerraf is describing is a movement known as Logical Positivism. The book Language, Truth, and Logic by the British philosopher A. J. Ayer served as a sort of manifesto for this

movement. As Benacerraf says, it was “not a great book,” but it was “a wonderful exponent of the spirit of the time.”7 The principal weapon employed by Ayer in his campaign against metaphysics was the vaunted Verification Principle of Meaning. According to that Principle, which went through a number of revisions, a sentence in order to be meaningful must be capable in principle of being empirically verified. Since metaphysical statements were beyond the reach of empirical science, they could not be verified and were therefore dismissed as devoid of factual content.

Ayer was explicit about the theological implications of this Verificationism.8 Since God is a metaphysical object, Ayer says, the possibility of religious knowledge is “ruled out by our treatment of metaphysics.” Thus, there can be no knowledge of God.

Now someone might say that we can offer evidence of God’s existence. But Ayer will have none of it. If by the word “God” you mean a transcendent being, says Ayer, then the word “God” is a metaphysical term, and so “it cannot be even probable that a god exists.” He explains, “To say that ‘God exists’ is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance.”9

Suppose a religious believer should appeal to religious experience as a means of knowledge of God. Ayer is not impressed. He would not think to deny that the religious believer has an experience, he says, any more than he would deny that someone has an experience of, say, seeing a yellow object. But, he says, “whereas the sentence ‘There exists here a yellow-colored material thing’ expresses a genuine proposition which could be empirically verified, the sentence ‘There exists a transcendent god’ has … no literal significance” because it is not verifiable. Thus the appeal to religious experience, says Ayer, is “altogether fallacious.”10

From this perspective, statements about God do not even have the dignity of being false. Now at first blush such a perspective might seem utterly implausible. If a statement like, “God loves you” were

no more meaningful than, “T’was brillig; and the slithey toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe,” then how could one even know what it was supposed to be about, so as to be able to say that statements about God are metaphysical and therefore meaningless?11 But as Nicholas Wolterstorff explains in a recent reminiscence:

By the mid-1950s we were all aware of the fact that the term ‘meaningless’ as employed by the positivists was a term of art. It was not their view that everything that failed their test was jabberwocky – meaningless in that sense – nor was it their view that one should never make utterances that failed their test. They just meant that one had not made an assertion, a true–false claim; one’s utterance lacked assertoric meaning.12

To illustrate, questions and commands have cognitive meaning, but they are neither true nor false, since they do not make any assertions. Metaphysical and theological sentences might be useful for some purpose but not to make assertions.

It was not just metaphysical statements and, hence, theological statements that were regarded by logical positivists as void of assertoric content. Ethical statements were also declared to be meaningless because they, too, cannot be empirically verified. Such statements are simply emotional expressions of the user’s feelings. Ayer says, “if I say ‘Stealing money is wrong’ I produce a statement which has no factual meaning… . It is as if I had written, ‘Stealing money!!’ … It is clear that there is nothing said here which can be true or false.”13 So he concludes that value judgments “have no objective validity whatsoever.”14 The same goes for aesthetic statements concerning beauty and ugliness. According to Ayer, “Such aesthetic words as ‘beautiful’ and ‘hideous’ are employed…, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings… .”15

It is sobering to realize that this was the sort of thinking that dominated the departments of philosophy at British and American universities during the last century into the 1960s.16 It was not

without its impact on religious life. Under the pressure of positivism, some theologians began to advocate non-cognitivist theories of theological language. In their view theological statements are not statements of fact at all but merely express the user's emotions and attitudes. For example, the sentence "God created the world" does not purport to make any factual statement at all but merely is a way of expressing, say, one's awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe.

Gilbert Ryle poignantly described the state of philosophical-theological dialogue in the late 1950s:

> In our half-century philosophy and theology have hardly been on speaking terms… . When theological coals were hot, the kettle of theological philosophy boiled briskly. If the kettle of theological philosophy is now not even steaming, it is because that fire has died down. Kettles cannot keep themselves on the boil. A philosopher cannot invent conceptual stresses and strains. He has to feel them if he is to be irked into dealing with them. I do not want to exaggerate. The theological fire has died down, but it has not quite gone out and the kettle of theological philosophy, though far from even simmering, is not quite stone cold.17

The low point undoubtedly came with the so-called Death of God theology of the mid-1960s.18 On April 8, 1966, Time magazine carried a cover which was completely black except for three words emblazoned in bright, red letters against the dark background: "Is God Dead?" And the article described the movement then current among American theologians to proclaim the death of God.

Today that movement has all but disappeared. The kettle of theological philosophy is once more boiling briskly, at least in the Anglo-American realm. What happened?

1.2 The Collapse of Verificationism

What happened is a remarkable story. Philosophers within the analytic tradition itself exposed an incoherence which lay at the very heart of the prevailing philosophy of positivism. They began to realize that the Verification Principle would force us to dismiss not only theological statements as meaningless, but also a great many scientific statements, so that the Principle undermined the sacred cow of science at whose altar they knelt.

Contemporary physics is filled with metaphysical statements that cannot be empirically verified. When the contemporary student of physics reads the anti-metaphysical polemics of early twentieth century scientists, he must feel as though he were peering into a different world. For it is now widely recognized that the boundaries of science are impossible to fix with precision, and during the last few decades theoretical physics has become characterized precisely by its metaphysical, speculative character. In various fields such as relativity theory, quantum mechanics, classical cosmology, and quantum cosmology, debates rage over overtly metaphysical issues.19 Take relativity theory, for example. Both special and general relativity are susceptible to radically different interpretations of the same physical phenomena and raise profound metaphysical questions about the nature of space and time. The eminent philosopher of science John Earman contends that when it comes to questions about the nature of space and time, there is simply no way to justify an empirical/philosophical dichotomy; the appropriate term for the study is the old one: Natural Philosophy.20 Or consider quantum physics. In Euan Squires' opinion, "In an effort to understand the quantum world, we are led beyond physics, certainly into philosophy and maybe even into cosmology, psychology and theology."21 There are at least ten different physical interpretations of the mathematical formalism of quantum mechanics which are empirically equivalent and yet differ meaningfully in their respective ontologies. Or take the field of classical cosmology. "Cosmology," says George Gale, "is science done at the limit: at the limit of our concepts, of our mathematical methods, of our instruments, indeed, of our very imaginations."22 In an article in Astronomy,

astrophysicists Tony Rothman and George Ellis pose the question, “Has astronomy become metaphysical?” and answer that it has.23 Questions which are metaphysical in character are hotly debated in astrophysical journals. Gale observes, “It is clear that metaphysics continues to play an honorable role in cosmology. And, to the extent that it is an honorable role, it is no dishonor to use metaphysics in one's cosmologizing.”24 Physics becomes most metaphysical in the budding field of quantum cosmology. Alex Vilenkin frankly characterizes his discipline as “metaphysical cosmology.”25 Metaphysical questions, hypotheses, and difficulties are abundant in these and other fields of modern physics. Philosopher of science Bas van Fraassen nicely puts it: “Do the concepts of the Trinity [and] the soul…baffle you? They pale beside the unimaginable otherness of closed space-times, event-horizons, EPR correlations, and bootstrap models.”26 If the ship of scientific naturalism was not to be scuttled, Verificationism had to be cut loose.

But even more fundamentally, it was also realized that the Verification Principle is self-refuting. One has but to ask oneself, is the sentence “A meaningful sentence must be capable in principle of being empirically verified” itself capable of being empirically verified? Obviously not; no amount of empirical evidence would serve to verify its truth. The Verification Principle is therefore by its own lights a meaningless combination of words, which need hardly detain us, or at best an arbitrary definition, which we are at liberty to reject. Therefore, the Verification Principle and the theory of meaning it supported have been universally abandoned by philosophers. William Hasker observes, “Nowadays ethics, religion, metaphysics, and science all go about their business largely untroubled by the positivist assault, which is well on its way to becoming a distant memory.”27

1.3 The Advent of Postmodernism

The downfall of positivism and the reopening for discussion of virtually all the traditional problems in philosophy has been called the central philosophical event of the second half of the twentieth century.28 One result of this collapse has been the rise of Postmodernism. Scientific naturalism, originating in the Enlightenment, is characteristic of so-called “Modernity,” or the modern age, which is dominated by science and technology. The collapse of Verificationism brought with it a sort of disillusionment with the whole Enlightenment project of scientific naturalism.

This might seem at first blush a welcome development for Christian believers, weary of attacks by Enlightenment naturalists. But Postmodernists have unfortunately tended to despair of ever finding objective truth and knowledge. After all, if science, man’s greatest intellectual achievement, cannot do so, then what hope is there? Hence, Postmodernists have tended to deny that there are universal standards of logic, rationality, and truth. This claim is obviously incompatible with the Christian idea of God, who, as the Creator and Sustainer of all things, is an objectively existing reality, and who, as an omniscient being, has a privileged perspective on the world, grasping the world as it is in the unity of his intellect. There is thus a unity and objectivity to truth which is incompatible with Postmodern relativism. Postmodernism therefore tends to be no more friendly to Christian truth claims than is Enlightenment naturalism. It reduces Christianity to but one voice in a cacophony of competing claims, none of which is objectively true.

1.4 The Rebirth of Christian Philosophy

Fortunately, Postmodernism was not the only response to the collapse of Verificationism. Since Verificationism had been the principal means of barring the door to metaphysics, the jettisoning of Verificationism meant that there was no longer anyone at the door to prevent this dreaded and unwelcome visitor from making a reappearance. So the demise of Verificationism has been

accompanied by a resurgence of metaphysics in Anglo-American philosophy, along with all the other traditional questions of philosophy which had been suppressed by the Verificationists. Along with this resurgence has come something new and altogether unanticipated: the birth of a new discipline, philosophy of religion, and a renaissance in Christian philosophy.29

Although philosophy of religion has been recognized as a delineated second-order discipline of philosophy as far back as G. W. F. Hegel, who lectured on the subject, analytic philosophy of religion is a recent movement of the last half century or so and is one of the most exciting and burgeoning areas of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. Its rise was facilitated by the demise of the Verificationist theory of meaning and the rebirth of metaphysics.30

Since the late 1960s Christian philosophers have been coming out of the closet and defending the truth of the Christian worldview with philosophically sophisticated arguments in the finest scholarly journals and professional societies.31 At the same time that theologians were writing God's obituary, a new generation of philosophers was re-discovering his vitality. And the face of Anglo-American philosophy has been transformed as a result. By 1980 Time found itself running another major story entitled "Modernizing the Case for God" in which it described the movement among contemporary philosophers to refurbish the traditional arguments for God's existence. Time marveled:

In a quiet revolution in thought and argument that hardly anybody could have foreseen only two decades ago, God is making a comeback. Most intriguingly, this is happening not among theologians or ordinary believers, but in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers, where the consensus had long banished the Almighty from fruitful discourse.32

According to the article, the noted American philosopher Roderick Chisholm believed that the reason that atheism was so influential in the previous generation is that the brightest philosophers were

atheists; but now, he says, many of the brightest philosophers are theists, and they are using a tough-minded intellectualism in defense of that belief that was formerly lacking on their side of the debate.

Today philosophy of religion flourishes in young journals such as the International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Religious Studies, Sophia, Faith and Philosophy, Philosophia Christi, American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, and other journals devoted to the discipline, not to mention the standard non-specialist journals. Professional societies such as the Society of Christian Philosophers, the Evangelical Philosophical Society, the American Catholic Philosophical Society, not to mention other smaller groups, number thousands of members.33 Publishing in philosophy of religion is booming, as is evident from the abundance of available textbooks (also testimony to the seemingly insatiable interest among students for courses on the subject). Major publishers now include in their Companion and Handbook series of reference works volumes on philosophy of religion along with volumes on traditional areas of philosophy like metaphysics, epistemology, and so forth.34

To provide some feel for the impact of this revolution in Anglo-American philosophy, I quote at some length an article by Quentin Smith which appeared in the fall of 2001 in the secularist journal Philo, lamenting what Smith called “the desecularization of academia that evolved in philosophy departments since the late 1960s.” Smith, himself a prominent non-theist philosopher, writes:

By the second half of the twentieth century, universities … had become in the main secularized. The standard… position in each field… assumed or involved arguments for a naturalist world-view; departments of theology or religion aimed to understand the meaning and origins of religious writings, not to develop arguments against naturalism. Analytic philosophers … treated theism as an anti-realist or non-cognitivist world-view, requiring the reality, not of a deity, but merely of emotive expressions or certain “forms of life”….

This is not to say that none of the scholars in the various academic fields were [sic] realist theists in their “private lives”; but realist

theists, for the most part, excluded their theism from their publications and teaching, in large part because theism … was mainly considered to have such a low epistemic status that it did not meet the standards of an “academically respectable” position to hold. The secularization of mainstream academia began to quickly unravel upon the publication of Plantinga’s influential book, God and Other Minds, in 1967. It became apparent to the philosophical profession that this book displayed that realist theists were not outmatched by naturalists in terms of the most valued standards of analytic philosophy: conceptual precision, rigor of argumentation, technical erudition, and an in-depth defense of an original world-view. This book, followed seven years later by Plantinga’s even more impressive book, The Nature of Necessity, made it manifest that a realist theist was writing at the highest qualitative level of analytic philosophy, on the same playing field as Carnap, Russell, Moore, Grünbaum, and other naturalists….

Naturalists passively watched as realist versions of theism, most influenced by Plantinga’s writings, began to sweep through the philosophical community, until today perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians. Although many theists do not work in the area of the philosophy of religion, so many of them do work in this area that there are now over five philosophy journals devoted to theism or the philosophy of religion….

… theists in other fields tend to compartmentalize their theistic beliefs from their scholarly work; they rarely assume and never argue for theism in their scholarly work. If they did, they would be committing academic suicide or, more exactly, their articles would quickly be rejected… . But in philosophy, it became, almost overnight, ‘academically respectable’ to argue for theism, making philosophy a favored field of entry for the most intelligent and talented theists entering academia today.35

Smith concludes, “God is not ‘dead’ in academia; he returned to life in the late 1960s and is now alive and well in his last academic

stronghold, philosophy departments.”36

This is the testimony of a prominent non-theist philosopher to the transformation that has taken place before his eyes in Anglo-American philosophy. Doubtless, Smith is exaggerating when he estimates that one-quarter to one-third of American philosophers are theists;37 but what his estimations do reveal is the perceived impact of Christian philosophers upon this field. The number of Christians among graduate students in philosophy is significantly higher than among current faculty, which suggests that the revolution will continue.

As a result of the work of Christian philosophers genuine advance has been made on important issues like the epistemic status of belief in God, the coherence of theism, and the problem of evil, so that questions which dominated earlier discussions have been resolved or have yielded to new questions.38 For example, along with the alleged meaninglessness of religious language, the so-called presumption of atheism, according to which atheism is a sort of default position, which so dominated mid-twentieth century philosophy of religion, is now a relic of the past. Similarly, few philosophers today defend the so-called logical version of the problem of evil, which claims that God and the suffering in the world are logically incompatible. The discussion of the coherence of theism, which analyzes the principal attributes traditionally ascribed to God, such as aseity, necessity, simplicity, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, has been an especially fertile field of exploration by Christian philosophers, so that anti-theistic critiques of these attributes have proved to be positively beneficial.

The renaissance of Christian philosophy has not been merely defensive, however. Rather it has also been accompanied by a resurgence of interest in natural theology, that branch of theology which seeks to prove God's existence apart from the resources of authoritative divine revelation. All of the traditional arguments for God’s existence, such as the cosmological, teleological, axiological, and ontological arguments, not to mention creative, new arguments,

find intelligent and articulate defenders on the contemporary philosophical scene.39 The important Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology features lengthy defenses of the most prominent theistic arguments by leading philosophers of religion.40 Alvin Plantinga, perhaps the most important living philosopher of religion, has defended what he calls “two dozen (or so) theistic arguments.”41 Plantinga’s contribution to natural theology is now celebrated and advanced in a recent collaborative volume Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God’s Existence.42 Of course, there are replies and counter-replies to all of these arguments, and no one imagines that a consensus will be reached. But theists welcome this debate. For the very presence of the debate is itself a sign of how healthy and vibrant a theistic worldview is today.43

1.5 The Birth of Analytic Theology

One of the most noteworthy recent developments in philosophy of religion has been the ingress of Christian philosophers into areas normally considered the province of systematic theologians. In particular, many Christian philosophers have taken up a share of the task of formulating and defending coherent statements of Christian doctrine.44 Although in 1955 Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre chose “New Essays in Philosophical Theology” as the title of their collection of essays, the contributors to that volume were, in fact, largely concerned with generic philosophy of religion, rather than specific doctrines.45 William Alston could report in 1967 that “In works on the philosophy of religion one finds little discussion of relatively special doctrines that are peculiar to a given religion.”46 In 1984 Thomas Morris, reflecting on the “near total lack of any contemporary philosophical attention to the claims and commitments special to the Christian faith,” organized a conference at the University of Notre Dame to address such doctrines as the Trinity and incarnation and ideas of sin, atonement, and sanctification.47 The published papers were intended to represent “the beginnings of an exciting new direction of philosophical exploration – a careful and

sustained conceptual investigation into the distinctive doctrines and concerns of the Christian faith, as expressed in its scriptures, creeds, conciliar decrees, and other seminal documents."48 Today the most interesting and important work in exploring philosophical issues in systematic theology is being done, not by traditional theologians, but by analytic philosophers of religion.49 The ingress of Christian philosophers into systematic theology has served to spawn a new movement within Anglo-American theology itself. Professional theologians employing the techniques of analytic philosophy have styled themselves "analytic theologians" and their field "analytic theology."50 Only a "pipe dream" as recently as 2006, today analytic theology has become a reality, "one of the most significant developments in recent theological history."51

It is impossible to avoid the impression that many Christian philosophers were, and are, fairly disgruntled with the state of contemporary theology and see themselves as attempting to help rectify the situation.52 Swinburne has complained:

It is one of the intellectual tragedies of our age that when philosophy in English-speaking countries has developed high standards of argument and clear thinking, the style of theological writing has been largely influenced by the Continental philosophy of Existentialism, which despite its considerable other merits, has been distinguished by a very loose and sloppy style of argument. If argument has a place in theology, large-scale theology needs clear and rigorous argument. The point was very well grasped by Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus, by Berkeley, Butler, and Paley. It is high time for theology to return to their standards.53

Randall Rauser is, if possible, even harsher in his verdict on contemporary theology and the impotence of Continental philosophy to provide requisite guidance.54

Little wonder, then, that, as Michael Rea reported in 2009, "by and large, the established figures in both [philosophy and theology] don't even view mutual conversation as worth pursuing. They ignore each

other."55 Even today analytic theology is pursued by a relatively small number of theologians, who seem eager to reach out to their colleagues in theology and religious studies.56

Why Continental thinkers have resisted analytic approaches to theology is a matter of discussion, but there seems to be a consensus that it due in various ways to the lingering shadow of Immanuel Kant.57 The skepticism of David Hume concerning miracles likewise continues to powerfully influence biblical and systematic theologians.58 There is an irony in this reliance upon these two philosophical figures, noted by Morris:

What is particularly interesting about the references theologians make to Kant or Hume is that most often we find the philosopher merely mentioned…, but we rarely, if ever, see an account of precisely which arguments of his are supposed to have accomplished the alleged demolition of cognitivism, and exactly how they may be supposed to have had that effect. In fact, I must confess to never having seen in the writings of any contemporary theologian the exposition of a single argument from either Hume or Kant, or any other historical figure, for that matter, which comes anywhere near to demolishing, or even irreparably damaging traditional theistic metaphysics, historical Christian doctrine, or the epistemology of what we might call 'theological realism', the construal of theology as a discipline whose intent is to represent religious realities as they, in fact, are.59

More generally, Wolterstorff suggests – quite plausibly it seems – that one of the reasons that philosophical theology has not flourished in the continental tradition is that "continental philosophers, unlike their analytic counterparts, are still preoccupied with the traditional question of the classical modern philosophers," namely, "the limits of thought and judgment."60 Continental theologians remain Kantian in their denial of knowledge of God mediated by human reason. Moreover, continental theologians and philosophers have also thought that the demise of classical foundationalism leads inevitably

to a post-modernist relativism concerning truth and knowledge.61 The latter inference, as we shall see, is just based on misunderstanding, and as for the former there are no good arguments for the Kantian denial of the knowledge of God.

Rea also seeks to identify various reasons why continental thinkers reject, not only the aims, but also the style of analytic philosophy. For example, continental thinkers complain that analytic philosophy prioritizes clarity and precision at the expense of everything else, restricting our choice of topics and encouraging the use of the wrong rhetorical tools. Analytic philosophy ignores the fact that sometimes in order to attain wisdom and understanding we have to rely substantively on metaphor and other literary tropes.62 Such a complaint betrays ignorance of analytic philosophy. To cite one example, Stephen Yablo's figuralism is an attempt to deal with the alleged metaphysical implications of true mathematical discourse for the reality of abstract objects precisely by appeal to the use of existential metaphors.63 In order to put forth a convincing case for a metaphorical interpretation Yablo must prioritize clarity and precision, lest his figuralism be subverted by ambiguity or invalidity. Such clarity and precision come, not at the expense of everything else, but in order to justify our substantively relying on metaphor to express the truth. In philosophical theology, Richard Swinburne emphasizes the indispensability of metaphor and other forms of figurative language for understanding divine revelation, but he hardly does so at the sacrifice of clarity and precision.64

Rea also observes that some contemporary theologians object to the style of analytic philosophy because doctrinal claims do not express determinate propositions and there is no guarantee that they will do so even once they have been interpreted. A particular claim might be an evocative metaphor with very minimal, if any, propositional content.65 But such a possibility cannot serve as a general proscription of analytic philosophizing about religious subjects. Doctrinal claims will need to be examined on a case by case basis to see what, if any, propositional content they express. It was the error of the logical positivists, one will recall, to make a blanket claim that

theological statements assert no propositions, and we should be foolish, indeed, to repeat their error. We shall want good arguments in every case that the doctrinal claim in question lacks propositional content, and merely raising the specter of onto-theology will not do the trick. We may be surprised at the rich propositional content of many doctrinal claims.

Finally, Rea notes that some contemporary theologians claim that metaphysical theorizing about God is idolatrous. When we try to answer the question, “Does God exist?”, metaphysicians will inevitably analyze the concept of God in a way that illegitimately privileges some aspects of the concept over others. Talk of the God of the philosophers thus replaces talk about God. Therefore, the God of analytic metaphysical discourse is an idol.66 This objection is simplistic. Analytic philosophers of religion fully realize that God can be conceived in a variety of ways which complement one another. For example, the argument from contingency leads to a metaphysically necessary being that is the sufficient reason for the existence of everything else, the kalām cosmological argument leads to a first, uncaused, transcendent, enormously powerful, personal creator of the universe, the fine-tuning argument leads to an incomprehensibly intelligent designer of the cosmos who established the laws of nature and set their parameters, the moral argument leads to a personal being who is the paradigm of moral goodness and the giver of the moral law, and so on. Such conceptions of God may, in fact, be much richer than the ordinary language meaning of “God” and so expand our vision of who God is. Post-modern theology, by contrast, threatens to stunt our understanding of God.

It has been observed that never since the high Middle Ages has there been such a flourishing of philosophical theology as in our day.67 This makes the time ripe for the writing of a systematic philosophical theology.

2 Delineating the Disciplines

But what, exactly, is systematic philosophical theology, and how does it relate to the various other disciplines we have mentioned?

These are questions explored by what Rea, on the analogy of metaethics or metaontology, calls metatheology, reflection on the nature and methods of theology as a discipline.68 Answering these questions will help us to set our goals more clearly.

2.1 Systematic Theology

To begin with systematic theology, the expression “systematic theology,” like “history” or “philosophy,” has various referents. In my opening paragraph of this Prolegomenon, it refers to a literary corpus, as in “Pannenberg’s 3-volume systematic theology.” Similarly, it can refer to a theologian’s thought system, as in the sentence “Natural theology plays a significant role in Swinburne’s systematic theology.” In both of these cases systematic theology is propositional in nature, consisting of assertions or statements made by the relevant person. On the other hand, “systematic theology” may refer to an academic field or discipline, as when we say, “Gregory is studying systematic theology at Cambridge.” Such a general use of the expression does not tie systematic theology to any particular person. Sometimes “systematic theology” is used to designate a task or activity which the theologian pursues, as in “Doing systematic theology well requires not only biblical expertise but also logical training.” All of these uses of the term are common and therefore legitimate. In what follows, we shall not try to differentiate among them, since the context usually makes clear how the expression is being used.

If we think of systematic theology as an academic discipline or task, what are some of its determining characteristics? We might try to answer this question either definitionally or sociologically, that is to say, we might try to identify certain essential properties of the field or we might look to the way in which the field is commonly pursued by its practitioners.69 The problem with trying to characterize the field definitionally is that the essence of a field, if it is not to be highly controversial, will be so thin as to be largely uninformative. For example, it doubtless belongs to the essence of philosophy of

religion that it involves philosophizing about religion rather than, say, chemistry, but beyond that it is difficult to say much more that will not be contestable. Characterizing a field sociologically need not make us a prisoner to faddishness, as some fear, for we may take the long view and see how theologians have pursued their field for centuries, and not merely according to current fashion. If what we are calling systematic theology does not resemble anything that has at any time been practiced by recognized systematic theologians, then we are in all likelihood pursuing a study, for example, biblical theology, which, however worthy, just is not systematic theology.

So what does systematic theology look like when pursued by professional theologians? As theology, its subject matter is God and things considered in relation to God.70 So, for example, theological anthropology, as contrasted with secular anthropology, will consider man insofar as he stands in relation to God. What, then, makes theology systematic? Four features come to mind:

It is organized or structured, typically according to certain themes.

It draws upon both authoritative Scriptures as well as all relevant secular disciplines.

It aims at completeness, enunciating at least the broad outlines of a synoptic worldview.

It offers and defends, insofar as it can, a logically coherent formulation of its worldview.

Notice that systematic theology so characterized need not be Christian. During the Middle Ages Islamic theology and philosophy were flourishing enterprises in Muslim lands, often at loggerheads with each other. Indeed, it was Islamic theology that finally vanquished philosophy from Muslim intellectual culture. Given that theology concerns first and foremost God, non-theistic religions like Buddhism or Advaita Vedanta Hinduism may have systematic

religious worldviews, but they cannot properly be labeled theology. But within the monotheistic traditions there can be non-Christian systematic theologies. Obviously, our project is Christian systematic theology.

2.2 Systematic Philosophical Theology

So what is it for systematic theology to be systematic philosophical theology? The adjective “philosophical” serves simply as a means of emphasis, underlining the need for a logically coherent formulation and defense of its worldview. In virtually every topic area it treats, such as doctrine of God, doctrine of Christ, doctrine of creation, and so on, Christian systematic theology raises profound and often difficult philosophical questions that the systematic theologian must address. This feature serves to differentiate systematic theology from biblical theology, which does not aspire to systematicity, as characterized above.71 According to James Meade, “Biblical theology seeks to identify and understand the Bible’s theological message and themes, that is what the Bible says about God, and God’s relationship to all creation, especially to humankind.”72 It is striking how similar these themes are to those of systematic theology. What is lacking here is the input of historical and philosophical theology. Ben Witherington emphasizes that biblical theology is grounded quite strictly in the exegesis of the biblical texts and their clearest implications and is therefore neither historical theology nor any sort of systematic theology.73 Biblical theology restricts itself in various respects, treating, for example, Paul’s doctrine of the atonement or, more generally, a biblical doctrine of the atonement, without seeking to formulate and defend a coherent theory of the atonement. Usually untrained in philosophy, biblical theologians rightly restrict themselves to exegetical issues on which they are expert. Brevard Childs distinguishes descriptive biblical theology, which involves a historical study of the views of the biblical authors themselves, and constructive biblical theology, which

attempts to formulate a modern theology compatible with the Bible.74 Constructive biblical theology represents a step in the direction of systematic theology. Analytic philosophy can be surprisingly helpful to biblical theologians in virtue of its emphasis on conceptual clarification.75 Systematic theologians will draw upon the work of biblical theologians as one of their resources for the enunciation of a biblically, as well as philosophically, adequate Christian worldview.

It will be obvious from what I have written in the previous section that I am firmly committed to analytic philosophy's being the philosophy employed in systematic philosophical theology. I agree with the previously expressed opinion that continental philosophy is much too woolly and wild to be of significant help in the formulation and defense of coherent Christian doctrine, and theologians' reliance on it has impaired their theology. While analytic philosophy may resist close definition, it may be accurately thought of, not as a list of substantive philosophical claims such as naturalism, mind/body physicalism, mathematical Platonism, mereological universalism, epistemological foundationalism, moral realism, and so on, but rather as a method for exploring such difficult questions.76 It prizes clarity of definition, conceptual analysis, clear formulation of premises and arguments, and logical validity and coherence.77 As Michael Rea observes, these seem to be "fairly commonsensical virtues" that we all recognize:

Reason coherently; write clearly; say what you mean and mean what you say; try to express your ideas in terms that your audience will understand; try not to express your arguments and conclusions in overly 'poetic' language; understand the terms that you're employing and rely on your understanding of those terms to draw out the implications of what you say and what you presuppose; and so on. Thus construed, it's hard to imagine how anyone could sensibly object.78

Indeed; and the intellectual virtues of the analytic method of theorizing are ignored at our peril.

Systematic theology done well, then, will comprise philosophical theology. The only difference between the two seems be the range of topics dealt with.79 Systematic theology will be philosophical theology drawing upon Scripture to address the full theological curriculum (but, I shall claim, without taking on the burden of positive apologetics).

This understanding of systematic philosophical theology implies that this discipline is a theoretical pursuit, what German theologians call a Wissenschaft. It is a source of knowledge about reality, not just a way of fostering a feeling of dependence upon the Absolute or a way of exercising faith. It has propositional content which is objectively true or false. It is, moreover, governed by rigorous standards of argument and logical rules of inference, open to taking account of knowledge acquired from all fields. Thus, Crisp rightly characterizes Christian systematic theology as “that branch of theological science that attempts to give an organized, integrated, and systematic account of the various doctrines of the Christian faith.”80

Therefore, although systematic theology is ultimately done for the glory of God and is an expression of loving God with all our minds and will help us to know and worship God more profoundly, nevertheless as a theoretical discipline the proximate purpose of theology is to lay out in an organized, coherent way Christian truth claims.81 Thus, it is a fundamental mistake to think that whereas philosophy aims at propositional knowledge of an object, theology aims at non-propositional knowledge of a person.82 This distinction fails to reckon with the fact that theology, like philosophy, is a Wissenschaft; each of them seeks to provide theoretical knowledge of its object. Theology seeks to give us propositional knowledge about God and the world as related to him.83 As Michael Rea has advised, we should be rightly cautious about any construal of theology which sees its proximate aim at providing personal knowledge of God. For that would make theology a rival to Scripture.

“And that is a project which Christian philosophers and theologians ought to try to avoid… the right theoretical task for Christian philosophers and theologians to pursue is in fact one that involves clarifying, systematizing, and model building – precisely the sort of project that analytic philosophers are engaged in.”84 Systematic theology is, in short, a science, not a spiritual discipline.

If this is right, then Christian systematic theology is not the exclusive prerogative of a believer.85 Because theology is a Wissenschaft, we should reject Pietism’s aim of a theologia regenitorum. Despite its prima facie appeal to believers, this notion is misconceived. That it is so becomes clear when we recall that systematic theology need not be Christian at all. An eminent Islamicist like Kenneth Cragg86 could write, if he desired, a fully adequate Islamic systematic theology based on the Qur’an and the Hadith, despite his not being Muslim. By the same token, one need not be a regenerate Christian to write a Christian systematic theology, and systematic theologians who are at best merely nominally Christian come readily to mind. To think otherwise is to be guilty of a sort of genetic fallacy, attempting to invalidate a truth claim on the basis of how someone came to hold it. If Christian truth claims are true, then it simply does not matter who enunciates them. Now of course, we might claim that in order to write a good systematic theology of the Christian faith, one must be a regenerate Christian, for an unbeliever is unlikely to have the interest or stamina to engage in so arduous project and a merely nominal believer is apt to miss important truths. But that is a quite different claim than the claim that systematic theology as such can be written only by a regenerate believer.

2.3 Dogmatics

Our characterization of Christian systematic theology raises the question of how systematic theology relates to Christian dogmatics. What we have been calling systematic theology is known as dogmatic theology or dogmatics in German theology.87 For

Catholics dogmatic theology along with fundamental theology and moral theology make up what they call “systematic theology,” an overarching field for which we have no equivalent term in English. So it is simply not the case, as has been claimed, that dogmatics restricts itself to the doctrinal content of the creeds of the church. If one desires a label for that sort of theology, then “confessional theology” may serve to denote it.88 Following German usage, then, we shall take “dogmatics” to be another name for systematic theology as we have characterized it. German Christian dogmatics does tend to be more heavily historical than Anglo-American systematic theology, tracing the history of dogma over the centuries. But that is a characteristic emphasis of German theological education in general and, hence, of German systematic theology (dogmatics). Since in doing systematic theology we stand on the shoulders of giants, a familiarity with the history of dogma will be invaluable for the systematic theologian. If we want a separate label for the study of the history of doctrine alone, then we may refer to this field as “historical theology.”89

2.4 Fundamental Theology and Apologetics

It will be recalled that systematic theology, as we have characterized it, seeks not only to formulate, but also to defend coherent statements of Christian doctrine that take account of what we learn from all fields of study. It is this feature of systematic theology that especially requires and justifies its renewal for every generation.90 This serves to raise the question of systematic theology’s relationship to fundamental theology and apologetics.91 In contrast to fundamental theology and apologetics, systematic theology is not tasked with the responsibility of positively proving the truth of its doctrinal assertions, even to the degree of being more probable than not. As Thomas Aquinas explained, there are truths which faith proposes and which reason is able to recover, that is, to prove, and truths which faith proposes but which are not recoverable, that is, provable, by reason, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity (Summa

theologiae Ia.1.1). While human reason, unaided by divine revelation, is able to prove God's existence, Thomas held that it cannot prove that God is triune. This truth is revealed to us in Scripture, whose authority is ratified by miracles and fulfilled prophecy.

Christian apologetics is that branch of Christian theology which seeks to provide rational justification for Christianity's truth claims. Apologetics may be employed either positively (offensively) to provide arguments and evidence in support of Christian truth claims or negatively (defensively) to defeat putative defeaters of Christian truth claims. Positive apologetics is subdivided into natural theology, which seeks to prove a generic theism common to all the great monotheistic religions, and Christian evidences, which seeks to prove that a specifically Christian theism is true. Defensive apologetics may be similarly subdivided, defeating would-be defeaters of theism, such as the problem of evil or challenges to the coherence of theism, or defeating alleged defeaters of specifically Christian theism, such as mythological views of Jesus.

Fundamental theology, as traditionally practiced in the Roman Catholic church, seeks to provide positive proof of its doctrinal claims, which are accordingly much more restricted than the doctrines of systematic theology. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, finds no place in the syllabus of fundamental theology. The topics traditionally handled in fundamental theology include the revelation of God in the history of Israel and Jesus Christ; the conditions that open human beings to accepting in faith the self-communication of God; the testimony that puts us into contact with the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and that makes faith in him a credible option; the transmission through inspired Scripture and tradition of the experience of God's self-communication; the founding and mission of the Christian church; and questions about theological knowledge and methods.92 It is interesting that the doctrine of God's existence has not been traditionally considered a part of fundamental theology, but rather a part of natural theology and so part of the so-called preambles of faith. It is hard to

understand the exclusion of God’s existence from the topics of fundamental theology, and some contemporary fundamental theologians would add it to the syllabus.

Roman Catholic fundamental theology appears to be just another name for apologetics, restricted to a certain range of topics. Indeed, fundamental theology did originate in eighteenth century Protestant and Anglican apologetics aimed at Enlightenment Deists, agnostics, and atheists.93 Traditionally, Roman Catholic thought could be compared to a 3-story building. On the first (ground) floor, philosophy proves God's existence and attributes (but not triune nature); on the second floor, apologetics proves the factuality of divine revelation via the historical credibility of the Scriptures and tradition (as shown by miracles and fulfilled prophecies); and on the third floor dogmatics and moral theology systematize what has been communicated to us through divine revelation. Fundamental theology eventually came to occupy the second floor. The three traditional topics of fundamental theology were demonstratio religiosa (man has a religious openness and a philosophical glimpse of God); demonstratio Christiana (Christian revelation has occurred, the person of Christ is important, his resurrection was historical, and so on); and demonstratio Catholica (the Catholic tradition is the most authentic tradition, and revelation proceeds in the doctrinal tradition and clarification of the Catholic church). Fundamental theology thus seems to be apologetics in a Catholic mode.

Although Gerald O’Collins seeks to differentiate between fundamental theology and apologetics,94 the three differences he identifies seem insufficient to demarcate these disciplines:

A Christian apologist may deal simply with one question, such as the problem of evil, but fundamental theology must deal with many other questions as well, so that its agenda constitutes a whole theological discipline. Response: Apologetics also deals with a wide range of topics, including those covered by fundamental theology, and so is also a theological discipline. Indeed, fundamental theology appears

to handle but a restricted range of apologetical topics important for Catholics.

Good apologetics characteristically has a sharply defined audience, but fundamental theology frequently has a wider range of readers in mind. Response: This is not only manifestly false, since apologetics addresses believers and unbelievers alike, but readership hardly determines the character of a discipline. One might as well try to distinguish fundamental theology from apologetics by saying that the former, unlike the latter, is read mostly by Roman Catholics.

While polemics belongs to the exercise of apologetics, the tone of fundamental theologians is or should be more expository and less polemically inclined to illustrate defects in opposing positions. Response: The point here seems to be that while fundamental theology seeks both to provide a positive case for Christian faith and to defeat objections to Christian faith, it does not aim to provide defeaters of opposing views. I am very skeptical, indeed, that fundamental theologians abstain from providing defeaters of opposing views, for example, naturalistic alternatives to Jesus' resurrection; but O'Collins' caveat "or should be" already suggests that we do not have here a truly distinguishing feature of fundamental theology. Thus fundamental theology is apologetics regarding a particular, but flexible, range of topics.

In contrast to apologetics and fundamental theology, systematic theology (dogmatics) should not be burdened with providing positive proof of its doctrinal claims. Insofar as systematic theology seeks to formulate and defend coherent statements of Christian doctrine, it overlaps with defensive (or negative) Christian apologetics, offering defeaters of challenges to, for example, the coherence of theism or the coherence of doctrines like the Trinity and incarnation. But it need not take the offensive by offering a positive case for the truth of its doctrines. This would collapse the distinction between systematic theology and apologetics and saddle the systematic theologian with a burden of proof that he does not bear.

We cannot therefore agree with Pannenberg in seeing “the truth of Christian doctrine as the theme of systematic theology.”95 Pannenberg believes that “Enlightenment criticism of both scripture and church doctrine has made it impossible ever since, in the presentation of Christian doctrine, freely to use them as authorities for divine revelation as medieval theology and the older Protestant theology did.”96 As a result of this loss of authority the weight of the question as to the truth of Christian doctrine “has shifted over entirely to dogmatics.”97 He insists that dogmatic theology has “to present, test, and if possible confirm” the truth claims of the Christian doctrinal tradition.98 In sum, “Dogmatics as systematic theology proceeds by way of both assertion and hypothesis as it offers a model of the world, humanity, and history as they are grounded in God, a model which, if it is tenable, will ‘prove’ the reality of God and the truth of Christian doctrine, showing them to be consistently conceivable, and also confirming them, by the form of presentation.”99

Pannenberg’s claim here is surprising. One should have thought that in the absence of the traditional authorities of Scripture and church doctrine, the weight of the question as to the truth of Christian doctrine would have shifted over to fundamental theology and apologetics. But Pannenberg self-consciously assimilates dogmatics to fundamental theology and apologetics. He writes that traditionally:

> the only question as regards the themes [of Protestant dogmatics] has been whether and how they derive from the source. Apologetics has had the task of raising the question of the truth of Christian doctrine. With few exceptions dogmatics has dealt only with the content.

Similarly, Roman Catholic theology has developed a distinction between fundamental theology and systematic theology. The former has to confirm the credibility of the Christian revelation, the latter to unfold its content. But is this division of duties justifiable? Does not an unfolding of the content of Christian teaching inevitably involve

the question of its truth and true significance if the teaching is not to be a mere inventory of historical curiosities but is to be presented as divine revelation? It may surely be expected of dogmatics that it will also argue on behalf of the doctrinal content that it unfolds and confirm its truth.100

This attempt to assimilate systematic theology and apologetics does not take sufficient cognizance of the distinction between the defensive and offensive roles of apologetics. Since systematic theology has as its goal the formulation and defense of a logically coherent worldview that takes into account information acquired from all disciplines, it will, indeed, be concerned with the truth of the doctrinal content it delivers and will involve a good deal of argumentation, as it attempts to defeat would-be defeaters of Christian doctrines. But that defensive role does not imply that systematic theology should offer a positive apologetic for the truth of Christian doctrines. To illustrate, Christian philosophers have attempted to explicate and defend various models of the incarnation which affirm the true deity and true humanity of Christ in order to show the coherence of that doctrine,101 but they would not presume to say that any of their models is true. It is sufficient to show that the model is plausible, that there are no good defeaters lodged against it. Pannenberg's call to provide positive confirmation of Christian doctrinal claims, however it may press upon the Christian apologist or fundamental theologian, is not an obligation for the systematic theologian.102

Pannenberg thinks that "the collapse of the older Protestant scripture principle as formulated in the doctrine of inspiration… invalidated the attempt to use the idea of verbal inspiration to establish the divine truth of scripture in all its parts as a presupposition."103 But, he adds, "this collapse did not make untenable the basing of Christian theology on scripture as the norm of its content.104 It might appear at first blush that Pannenberg is, in effect, attacking the method of presuppositionalism in apologetics.105 For he speaks of the attempt to "establish" or "decide about the truth" of Scripture on the basis of verbal inspiration.106 But presuppositionalism would seem to be a

red herring. Verbal inspiration is the grounds of Scripture's being an authoritative divine revelation, but it need not be thought to be the means by which we show that Scripture is an authoritative divine revelation. So, for example, Charles Hodge clearly distinguished between the question What does the Bible teach as to the nature and effects of the influence under which it is written? and the question Is the Bible what it claims to be?107 Far too often these questions are conflated. Verbal inspiration is relevant for answering the first question, not the second.

So how might Pannenberg's claim that the collapse of the traditional authorities requires the dogmatician to build a positive case for Christianity be viewed in light of contemporary developments in religious epistemology? It seems that Pannenberg rejects taking Scripture as a basic source of knowledge in light of modern historical-critical studies, which have exposed its many errors. We may, however, with Baker-Hytch, distinguish between two ways in which a theologian might appeal to Scripture and tradition, namely: (i) using a claim asserted by Scripture or ecclesial tradition as a foundational premise in an argument, and (ii) citing claims made by Scripture or ecclesial tradition in order to demonstrate what is entailed by Christian theism.108 What Pannenberg rejects is (i), while affirming (ii). The dogmatician might still appeal to Scripture as the source of the normative content of Christian doctrine, if not as a means of guaranteeing its truth.

Concerning (i), Pannenberg's rejection on historical-critical grounds of taking Scripture as a basic source of knowledge is rather odd, since many of the sources of knowledge taken as basic by contemporary epistemologists, such as memory, testimony, and even sense perception, are similarly error-prone and yet not, for all that, no longer basic. Why could Scripture not contain kernels of theological truth that are revelatory within the husks of antique science or history, which are incidental to its theological content? Pannenberg rejects any attempt to identify divine revelation with the theological content of Scripture, a move he calls "accommodation." Pannenberg gives no reason for rejecting accommodation, a

hermeneutical device that seems not at all implausible in view of Scripture's situatedness in the ancient world and its intention to teach, not ancient cosmology or biology, but various theological truths about Yahweh. So it is not clear that Scripture need be inerrant in all that it states in order to be a basic source of knowledge of God. We shall return to this subject when discussing the doctrine of verbal inspiration.

But let that pass for now. Even if Scripture is not taken to be a basic source of theological knowledge, Pannenberg recognizes that dogmaticians, in line with (ii) above, may appeal to Scripture as a source of information concerning Christian doctrine without presupposing its truth. Scripture was traditionally understood to be the norma normans of Christian doctrine.109 When asked how we know that the doctrinal content of Christianity is true, the dogmatician might appeal to the witness of the Holy Spirit or to evidence on its behalf of its authority. For example, Aquinas does not simply presuppose the truth of Scripture; rather Scripture's authority is made evident by the signs of credibility attending it, namely, miracles and prophecy. The dogmatician is properly concerned with establishing the doctrinal content of the Christian faith, not with establishing the truth of its doctrinal content. Just as a Christian Islamicist might lay out the doctrinal content of Islam on the basis of the teaching of the Qur'an and the Hadith without any assumption as to its truth, so the dogmatician may expound the doctrinal content of the Christian faith and even defend its inner coherence without any presupposition of its truth.

Pannenberg is rightly exercised that in our secular age Christian faith be an intellectually viable option for thinking men and women. But the task of presenting a positive case in confirmation of Christian truth claims is better left to the Christian apologist or fundamental theologian. It is enough for the Christian systematician to formulate and defend against objections a comprehensive and coherent formulation of a Christian worldview.

2.5 Philosophy of Religion

We come now to the important question of the relation of systematic theology to philosophy of religion. As it appears on the contemporary scene, there are actually two rather different disciplines going under the name of “philosophy of religion.” What I have described thus far is a sub-discipline of philosophy pursued by professional philosophers, who would typically participate in a professional society like the American Philosophical Association. But philosophy of religion is also a sub-discipline of religious studies, where it is typically carried out by professors of religion or theology who are active professionally in societies like the American Academy of Religion. These two approaches to philosophy of religion have a very different texture.110 Loosely speaking, we may say that the former is concerned with philosophizing about problems raised by religious truth claims, whereas the latter tends to philosophize about the phenomenon of religion itself. The latter therefore resembles more closely than the former the discipline of comparative religion; and when its advocates do reflect on a problem of philosophical significance, they often lack the conceptual tools furnished by training in analytic philosophy. The contemporary resurgence of interest in philosophy of religion is due almost entirely to the revolution that has taken place among professional analytic philosophers, whose work the practitioners of religious studies are finding increasingly difficult to ignore.

Our interest is entirely in philosophy of religion as a sub-discipline of philosophy. We are therefore spared the task of defining “religion,” since we are not interested in philosophizing about religion.111 Our task is made all the easier, moreover, by that fact that we are interested, not in philosophy of religion in general, but in the philosophy of the Christian religion, with which most of us are familiar.112 As a sub-discipline of philosophy, philosophy of religion has been aptly compared to other philosophical sub-disciplines like philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of art,

and so on. Such sub-disciplines explore philosophical questions that arise out of their respective fields. For example, in philosophy of science one of the major questions, constituting a sub-discipline of its own, is the nature of space and time: Is time tensed or tenseless? Is temporal becoming objective, or is reality a static 4-dimensional spacetime manifold? In philosophy of mathematics, the burning question concerns ontology: Do mathematical objects like numbers and sets exist as mind-independent objects? If so, how is mathematical knowledge possible? Similarly, Christian theology bristles with philosophical questions in virtually every area it touches, paramountly the doctrine of God.113 By philosophy of the Christian religion, then, one means philosophical reflection on the truth claims of Christian theology.

Apart from the addition of apologetics, the philosophy of the Christian religion is therefore coextensive with Christian systematic theology. Their subject matter is largely the same. This raises the important question whether they are to be differentiated, not with respect to the subjects they treat, but on the basis of their method.

2.5.1 The Attempt to Differentiate Philosophy from Theology

During the previous generation philosophy of religion was typically thought to be distinct from theology. The principal difference between the two fields lay in their basic sources. Philosophy of religion, as a field of philosophy, was thought to be a secular discipline which excluded non-natural basic sources of knowledge like divine revelation. By contrast theology, precisely because it is theology, includes divine revelation among its basic sources.

For Tillich, philosophy and theology, though they ask the same questions, are hermetically sealed disciplines which can neither conflict nor intersect. He identifies three ways in which they diverge. First, philosophy, in contrast to theology, is to be pursued with detachment and objectivity. We have already seen how Tillich thinks that the theologian stands inside the theological circle, passionately committed to the object of his study. By contrast:

The philosopher tries to maintain a detached objectivity toward being and its structures… . His passion is the passion for a truth which is open to general approach, subject to general criticism, changeable in accordance with every new insight, open and communicable. In all these respects he feels no different from the scientist, historian, psychologist, etc. He collaborates with them… . This relation to the sciences (in the broad sense of Wissenschaften) strengthens the detached, objective attitude of the philosopher.114

The second way in which the fields diverge concerns their sources. We have seen that for Tillich the theologian's source of knowledge is not the universal logos common to all men but the incarnate Logos mediated by the church. In contrast to the theologian, the philosopher pursues his study by means of the universal logos, that is, "pure reason."115 Thirdly, philosophy and theology diverge in their content, even when they address the same object. For example, the philosopher deals with causality as it appears in physics or psychology; he analyzes time as it is understood biologically or historically; he discusses space both on the astronomical as well as the microscopic level. He describes the epistemological subject and the relation of person and community.

The theologian, on the other hand, relates the same categories and concepts to the quest for a 'new being.' His assertions have a soteriological character. He discusses causality in relation to a prima causa, the ground of the whole series of causes and effects; he deals with time in relation to eternity, with space in relation to man's existential homelessness. He speaks of the self-estrangement of the subject, about the spiritual center of personal life, and about community as a possible embodiment of the 'New Being.'116

Because these fields are so diverse, there can be neither conflict nor synthesis between them. If the theologian and philosopher come into conflict, it is only because the theologian has stepped outside the

theological circle and become a philosopher or the philosopher has stepped into that circle and become a theologian. So, Tillich writes,

> The theologian has no right whatsoever to argue for a philosophical opinion in the name of his ultimate concern or on the basis of the theological circle. He is obliged to argue for a philosophical decision in the name of the universal logos and from the place which is no place: pure reason. It is a disgrace for the theologian and intolerable for the philosopher if in a philosophical discussion the theologian suddenly claims an authority other than pure reason. Conflicts on the philosophical level are conflicts between two philosophers, one of whom happens to be a theologian, but there are not conflicts between theology and philosophy.117

For the same reason, there can be no synthesis of philosophy and theology. Tillich firmly repudiates "the dream of a 'Christian philosophy.'"118 The only sense in which a philosophy can be said to be Christian is to have its roots in Western Christian history; but "In this sense all modern philosophy is Christian, even if it is humanistic, atheistic, and intentionally anti-Christian."119 The idea of a Christian philosophy in the sense of "a philosophy which is intentionally Christian" is self-contradictory and must be rejected.120

In the older textbooks of philosophy of religion one finds the same distinction drawn between philosophy of religion and theology of various sorts on the basis of philosophy's independence of theology. For example, John MacQuarrie thinks that philosophy of religion studies religion from a "disinterested" point of view, whereas philosophical theology belongs "within the theological enterprise."121 Frederick Ferré, appealing explicitly to Tillich, says that philosophy of religion is distinct from philosophical theology because the latter, like biblical theology and systematic theology, is "a species contained within the theological genus."122 What the philosophical genus looks like is evident from Ferré's unflattering comparison of philosophy of religion to apologetics:

To the extent… that apologetics is motivated by a fixed interest in defending certain established positions against all attacks, it is not qualified to be considered ‘philosophy’ at all. If the ruling motive of apologetics is not the spirit of free inquiry, the commitment to unhindered argument wherever it may lead, it lacks the dominant concern of philosophy. Apologetics to that extent is fundamentally the expression of a religious interest rather than a philosophical one. Its resemblance to philosophy is in appearance only; it is not a metareligious study so much as a defensive weapon of religion.123

On this interpretation, as on Tillich’s, philosophy of religion must be a sort of free thought, proceeding from no standpoint, committed to no prior positions, having no religious interest. In 1967 William Alston, who would later make such tremendous contributions to Christian philosophy, wrote, “The philosophy of religion… is distinguished from theology by the fact that it takes nothing for granted, at least nothing religious; in the course of its examination it takes the liberty of calling anything into question. Theology, in a narrow sense of that term, sets out to articulate the beliefs of a given religion and to put them into systematic order, without ever raising the ultimate question of their truth.”124 According to this surprising characterization, philosophy never proceeds from a religious standpoint, and theology never explores the basis of its own truth claims. Similarly, William Rowe states, “Philosophy of religion, unlike theology, is not primarily a discipline within religion, but a discipline which studies religion from a vantage point beyond.”125 Again, this characterization implies that philosophy of religion must proceed from a non-religious standpoint. Rowe acknowledges the awkward fact that Anselm and Aquinas can be viewed as philosophizing about certain issues in religion, but despite these overlaps, he thinks, the philosophy of religion as a discipline should not be identified with theology. One is astonished to find that as recently as 2021, in a work dedicated to exploring the relationship between analytic theology and related disciplines, the author distinguishes theology from philosophy by saying, “Roughly, theology… begins from revelation; the theologian accepts as true certain premises drawn from scripture and tradition and then reasons

about their implications. Philosophy, by contrast, begins from generally available premises that are in principle credible to anyone reasoning properly."126

2.5.2 The Collapse of Classical Foundationalism

As Eleonore Stump notes, this way of distinguishing the disciplines of philosophy and theology is an Enlightenment view characteristic of modernism. In the aftermath of the collapse of classical foundationalism, she says, "it is hard to know who would now whole-heartedly endorse this way of identifying philosophy and theology. On the contrary, we have learned to be skeptical of the whole Enlightenment view that seemed to support it."127 Philosophers working in meta-epistemology in the late twentieth century came to conclude, not only that the implicit epistemology of most philosophers during the modern period has been classical foundationalism, but, more importantly, that "classical foundationalism is untenable as a theory either of knowledge or of rational (responsible) belief."128

Analytic philosophers have pressed two main objections against classical foundationalism, closely akin to those that dethroned Verificationism. First, the theory is self-referentially incoherent. The very principle that our basic sources of knowledge are restricted to those that are self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses is not itself either self-evident, incorrigible, or evident to the senses. Therefore, if the principle is to be rationally believed, it must be inferable from beliefs that do meet these conditions. But it is not thus inferable and therefore cannot be rationally believed. Second, the theory would render a wide range of beliefs, such as perceptual beliefs, which we all rationally embrace, irrational, which is a reductio ad absurdum of the theory.129

2.5.3 Naturalized Epistemology

The collapse of classical foundationalism did not, however, automatically bring with it an openness of philosophers to non-natural basic sources of knowledge. It gave way instead to what W. V. O. Quine called “naturalized epistemology” or “naturalism” for short.130 According to naturalism, natural science is the sole arbiter of truth and sole guide to reality. Naturalism in this sense is just “the recognition that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described.”131 In contrast to classical foundationalism, Quine’s naturalized epistemology shunned what he called “first philosophy,” any attempt to justify the deliverances of the sciences.132 There should be no attempt to ground the natural sciences; rather this is where we begin our philosophizing: Naturalism

> sees natural science as an inquiry into reality, fallible and corrigible but not answerable to any supra-scientific tribunal, and not in need of any justification beyond observation and the hypothetico-deductive method….
>
> The naturalistic philosopher begins his reasoning within the inherited world theory as a going concern. He tentatively believes all of it, but believes also that some unidentified portions are wrong. He tries to improve, clarify, and understand the system from within. He is the busy sailor adrift on Neurath’s boat.133

The salient point here is that the marooned philosopher has no other resources than the deliverances of the natural sciences at his disposal. So although Quine abandoned classical foundationalism in taking natural science to be a basic source of knowledge, he does not include among our basic sources of knowledge non-natural or even non-scientific sources.

Now Quine’s was a generous scientism which was not restricted to the deliverances of the hard sciences like physics and chemistry. He explains, “In science itself I certainly want to include the farthest

flights of physics and cosmology, as well as experimental psychology, history, and the social sciences."134 Nonetheless, his naturalism does have some bite, as is illustrated by Quine's attitude toward tense and temporal becoming. Although he did not write on the subject at any length, Quine's passing remarks indicate that despite our ineluctable experience of the reality of tense and temporal becoming, Quine dutifully follows what he takes to be the verdict of the natural sciences that reality is tenseless and that temporal becoming is a subjective illusion of human consciousness. Naturalized epistemology, finding no place for tensed time in natural science, waves aside the deliverances of our experience of the presentness of experience and of temporal becoming. Similarly, the reality of the self, apprehended in first-person experience, is denied as a result of Quine's naturalism.

The relevant aspect of naturalized epistemology for theistic beliefs, then, is its restriction of our basic sources of knowledge to the sciences. Unlike Verificationism, which sought to eliminate metaphysics, Quine's naturalized epistemology domesticates it by seeing metaphysics as continuous with the natural sciences. Only those metaphysical entities, for example, mathematical objects, may be posited which are required by the truth of our best scientific theories. Quine claimed to be, at least in principle, quite open to the existence of supernatural realities: "If I saw indirect explanatory benefit in positing sensibilia, possibilia, spirits, a Creator, I would joyfully accord them scientific status too, on a par with such avowedly scientific posits as quarks and black holes."135 If the sciences provide good grounds for thinking that supernatural entities exist, then we should accept their reality, since there is no other independent, accepted source of knowledge about reality. But absent such evidence theistic beliefs would be irrational.

Quine's naturalism thus involves, as Michael Rea explains, a methodological disposition to restrict one's basic sources of knowledge to the deliverances of science, broadly construed. The crucial identifying dispositions of Quine's naturalism, he says, are "a high regard for science and scientific method, a disposition to

employ scientific methods and results in all domains of inquiry as much as possible to the exclusion of a priori speculative methods, [and] opposition to theories, particularly religious ones, that are untestable and do not play any significant role in filling out interstices of scientific theory."136

No orthodox Christian can embrace Quine's naturalized epistemology, since so doing would exclude divine revelation as a basic source of knowledge about reality. Christian theists, in contrast to naturalists, hold that theology is itself a Wissenschaft, that is to say, a body of knowledge. Given the widespread and lingering influence of Quine's naturalized epistemology,137 especially evident in such sub-disciplines as philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, and philosophy of mind, the Christian theist may find himself somewhat out of step with a good deal of contemporary philosophy. His theological arguments or objections will be treated dismissively as emanating from what has been called an "alienated epistemology."138 But as Alvin Plantinga has emphasized,139 the Christian philosopher does not take his philosophical marching orders from current philosophy, and integrity as Christian thinkers demands that we seek to formulate a worldview that integrates theological knowledge with other basic sources of knowledge such as are found in the natural sciences. The fact that naturalists reject sources of knowledge other than the sciences should not trouble us in our philosophizing.

Now, of course, as Plantinga acknowledges, if there were some reason to think that our basic sources of knowledge really are restricted to the natural sciences alone, then that would be a genuine matter for concern that would need to be addressed. But there is no such reason. Even if we allow that science needs no external justification for its being a basic source of knowledge, there is nothing in science itself that warrants the sweeping claim that there are no extra-scientific basic sources of such knowledge as moral, aesthetic, religious, and metaphysical knowledge.140 But then naturalism's restrictive epistemological stance is either justified

extra-scientifically, which makes naturalism self-defeating, or else simply unjustified.

Rea argues that naturalism must be regarded as unjustified.141 That is to say, naturalism is most plausibly taken to be a set of methodological dispositions on the part of the inquirer which treats only the deliverances of the natural sciences as basic sources of evidence. As a set of methodological dispositions (or a research program), naturalism is not a philosophical thesis at all and is therefore neither true nor false. Since it makes no claims, it requires no justification. But then neither can it assert its superiority to some other inquirer's non-naturalistic set of methodological dispositions which treats as basic sources of evidence not only the deliverances of science but, for example, rational intuition or divine revelation. Rea observes,

> What unifies naturalists is just a shared set of methodological dispositions. Furthermore, these dispositions preclude naturalists from justifiably believing that their research program is one that ought to be shared by others, or that it is the only one that issues in justified belief. For to think such things is to suppose in part that the epistemic status of scientific reasoning is open for philosophical debate. But the project of using philosophy to justify science is a project that naturalists reject.142

The naturalist may prefer his research program, but he has no grounds for thinking that those who reject his set of methodological dispositions err in doing so. The Christian theist, who rejects as too narrow the basic sources of evidence allowed by the naturalist, cannot be faulted for so doing, unless his own research program should prove to be self-defeating.

2.5.4 Epistemological Pluralism

Our present situation, Wolterstorff reflects, is thus one of extraordinary epistemological pluralism.143 Most philosophers no longer accept that philosophy requires shared foundations, a sort of "public philosophical reason" which the philosopher should employ in arriving at philosophical conclusions and in trying to persuade others.144 Philosophy is now widely assumed by analytic philosophers to be a dialogical pluralist enterprise.145 Even if the Christian philosopher is apt to be more successful in persuading others if he restricts himself to arguments employing public philosophical reason, it is difficult to see why the Christian philosopher in arriving at philosophical conclusions himself should pretend that he does not know what he really knows by restricting his basic sources of knowledge to secular sources. Indeed, such pretense makes a sham of philosophy as a quest for truth. The Christian philosopher of religion should freely employ all his basic sources of knowledge, including divine revelation, in which case any difference between the Christian philosopher of religion and the Christian systematic theologian on the basis of their sources evaporates.

My conclusion will be vigorously repudiated by some non-Christian philosophers. For example, Paul Draper and Ryan Nichols charge that contemporary philosophy of religion is unhealthy and even diseased because its religious practitioners suffer unconsciously from cognitive biases due to the peculiar influence of their religious beliefs and practices and that this disease manifests itself in symptoms like excessive partisanship, polemics, narrowness, and use of theological criteria of evaluation.146 Since these allegations are so severe, I want to look at them in some detail.

Draper and Nichols' twin claims each raise a host of questions. With respect to the alleged symptoms of religiously motivated bias, we need to know whether (i) contemporary Christian philosophers do, in fact, exhibit these traits, (ii) these traits are peculiar to Christian philosophers of religion, (iii) these traits are symptomatic of religious bias, and (iv) these traits are predominantly unhealthy. The listed traits prove to be something of a mixed bag. Although Draper and

Nichols make some effort to establish their first claim, they “do not, however, try to prove that philosophy of religion exhibits these symptoms.”147 Instead, they “assume that most philosophers familiar with the literature in philosophy of religion will easily recognize them.”148 Of course, these symptoms are recognizable when they occur, but that is not to say that they occur frequently or peculiarly in philosophy of religion or that they are inherently unhealthy.

Consider the use of evaluative criteria that are theological instead of philosophical. I endorse the use of theological criteria of evaluation, since, as we shall see, I take inspired Scripture to be authoritative in matters of doctrine and praxis. Draper and Nichols, by contrast, recommend that we “make a conscious effort to allow… the voice of authority to grow dim.”149 To my mind, this is folly, since it assumes that we do not in fact possess divine revelation of truths God wants us to know for the sake of our eternal salvation. For the same reason, I cannot accept their recommendation to “make a conscious decision to accept genuine risk,” where that is understood as running the risk of apostatizing.150 I consider infidelity to be a far worse disease of the soul than cognitive bias. Draper and Nichols understand that some philosophers who are sectarian theists might regard their recommendation as “disloyal to their religious community or to their God.”151 But they admonish us, “Yet in some sense such an attitude involves a lack of faith. If there really is a God and if such a God wants us to engage in inquiry concerning ultimate reality, then surely such a God would want that inquiry to be balanced. Balanced inquiry is, as we pointed out earlier, risky.”152 One wonders how these non-Christian philosophers know what God wants. God has told us what he wants, and running the risk of apostasy is not on the list.

So far as I can see, Draper and Nichols present no evidence that the use of theological evaluative criteria is the result of (unconscious) bias rather than careful epistemological reflection. They complain that:

positions on an issue are often dismissed simply because they are incompatible with scripture, or more often, with a particular controversial interpretation of scripture that is just assumed to be correct. Reinforcing such behavior is the fact that the motto of one of the premier journals in the field is ‘faith seeking understanding.’ This motto echoes the belief of some of the most influential philosophers of religion (e.g., Plantinga 1984) that philosophers who happen to be Christians should take the truth of Christian doctrines (as they happen to interpret them) as a starting point for philosophical inquiry.153

The complaint about controversial interpretations’ just being assumed to be correct serves to draw attention to what, in my opinion, is one of the greatest weaknesses of contemporary Christian philosophy, namely, its lack of engagement with the biblical text. Relatively few Christian philosophers make the effort to engage the text seriously. There is no excuse for assuming without argument the correctness of a controversial interpretation. But a far more serious problem is that Christian philosophers too frequently advocate positions in defiance of the clear teaching of Scripture. When it comes to doctrines such as divine aseity, divine foreknowledge (prognōsis) of future contingents, the reality of the soul, penal substitution, and so on, Christian philosophers often fail to submit to the authority of Scripture. In other words, the failure to advert to theological criteria of evaluation is all too characteristic of contemporary Christian philosophy. Further, Draper and Nichols’ remarks on “faith seeking understanding” signals their rejection of Reformed Epistemology, to be discussed in the locus De fide. Their characterizing, without argument, Reformed Epistemology as “epistemic recklessness” is unjustifiable.154 In short, although the use of theological evaluative criteria is characteristic of some Christian philosophers in distinction from their secular counterparts, such use cannot justifiably be merely assumed to be unhealthy or the result of bias.

Similarly, when it comes to partisanship, while Christian philosophers do exhibit partisanship in some sense, there is no reason to think that the trait exhibited is peculiar to Christian philosophers or that it is the result of religious bias or is unhealthy. For example, I am a die-hard partisan of the tensed theory of time and a committed Molinist. But such partisanship is characteristic of all fields of philosophy. Witness physicalism vs. dualism in the philosophy of mind, Platonism vs. anti-Platonism in the philosophy of mathematics, retributivism vs. consequentialism in theories of justice, and so on. As an illustration of partisanship, Draper and Nichols point out that "editors of collections on topics in philosophy of religion usually invite both theists and nontheists to contribute, assuming that they know which side each will take on the topic of the collection, even when taking the unexpected side is perfectly compatible with the authors' theism or nontheism."155 This illustration is unconvincing. Editors make such selections on the basis of a substantive record of prior publications on the part of contributors so as to ensure a good debate. In secular series such as Routledge's Little Debates on Big Questions, interlocutors are similarly so chosen. Moreover, partisanship is too fine-grained to be plausibly attributed to religious bias, since being a Christian does not make one a Molinist rather than a Thomist or Calvinist, for example. The adoption of such viewpoints is more plausibly largely the result of serious philosophico-theological reflection. And partisanship so understood is not at all unhealthy, it seems to me. It affords opportunities for community, intellectual stimulus, and collaboration with like-minded colleagues.

As for being polemical, while religious bias might promote unhealthy use of polemical language, Draper and Nichols can cite no scientific study supporting such a claim. Is philosophy of religion in any case peculiarly polemical? Draper and Nichols observe, "So far as we know, it is the only area of philosophy in which philosophical opponents are labeled as 'enemies'" or in which "an argument is called 'triumphant' by someone who admits that it fails to establish its conclusion."156 This statement is naïve. Not only are the examples

mild, but such polemics characterize other fields of philosophy as well. One has only to read the works of physicalists in philosophy of mind to see how substance dualists are ridiculed and excoriated. In philosophy of biology, proponents of so-called Intelligent Design like Stephen Meyer and Michael Behe, despite their impeccably respectful and irenic manner, are routinely denounced and even subjected to name-calling. By contrast, analytic Christian philosophy of religion is characteristically respectful, irenic, and almost dry to the point of boredom. I flatly reject the allegation that Christian philosophical discourse is excessively polemical.

Finally, what shall we say about excessive narrowness? Draper and Nichols complain, “Typically, religion is unreflectively equated with some form of theism or even classical theism, and atheism is equated with naturalism or even physicalism, ignoring the broad and plausible territory between those extremes… . Nothing equaling this extraordinary lack of interest in the full range of plausible positions can to our knowledge be found in any other area of philosophy.”157 I am not sure if other areas of philosophy explore the full range of alternatives. In the philosophy of time and space, for example, alternatives to standard relativistic theories affirming relations of absolute simultaneity have until recently been shunned. In philosophy of mathematics, scarcely any philosophers have until recently explored divine conceptualism as an alternative to Platonism about mathematical objects. In any case, any narrowness of focus in Christian philosophy of religion is most plausibly due, not to a lack of objectivity, but to personal interests, time constraints, and to the youthfulness of the discipline as a whole. Can Draper and Nichols seriously complain that “Alternatives like … ietsism … are rarely mentioned” by Christian philosophers?158 Am I supposed to spend what little, precious time I have exploring ietsism? At any rate, as the discipline has matured, its focus has steadily broadened to include a wide range of philosophies East and West. Copan and Meister’s Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion (2007) was one of the first attempts to include more diverse perspectives, and the four-volume Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion edited

by Goetz and Taliaferro (2022) includes an amazing sweep of topics (though ietsism still fails to get a mention!). Draper and Nichols should thus conclude that in this respect philosophy of religion is becoming increasingly healthy.

All this concerns their claim that cognitive bias manifests itself in unhealthy symptoms in Christian philosophy of religion. But what about their first claim that Christian philosophers suffer unconsciously from cognitive biases due to the peculiar influence of their religious beliefs and practices? The claim is difficult to assess because, as in Freudianism, a repudiation of the claim is taken to be supportive of the claim. Draper and Nichols write, “One complication of the disease … is that many philosophers of religion are likely to be completely unaware that their discipline suffers from it (because the processes contributing to the disease typically operate at the nonconscious level). In fact, many will, predictably, continue to be unaware of this even after reading this paper because they will deny it.”159 My rejection of their claim that philosophy of religion is diseased is evidence that I suffer from the disease.

Here we want to know whether (i) Christian philosophers of religion do suffer from cognitive bias, (ii) cognitive bias is peculiar to Christian philosophers of religion, (iii) their cognitive bias is due to religious influences, and (iv) there are not also positive benefits arising from cognitive biases. Draper and Nichols cite various scientific studies revealing that cognitive bias, understood as a lack of objectivity in argument assessment, is a universal condition of mankind. People are inclined to accept arguments that support their own views (confirmation bias) and are disinclined to entertain arguments against their own views (disconfirmation bias).160 But although Draper and Nichols repeatedly assert that “while cognitive biases are no doubt a problem in all inquiry and in all areas of philosophy, they are particularly damaging to inquiry in philosophy of religion,” they can cite no studies in support of the latter claim.161 Instead of peer-reviewed, scientific studies, we are provided commonsensical arguments to show that:

similar results are sure to be found when the above experiments are replicated with arguments about religion, especially when using philosophers of religion as participants. First, philosophers are emotional creatures like other humans. Second, professional philosophers of religion would score high on tests of sophistication about arguments in philosophy of religion as opposed to control participants. Third, many religious philosophers of religion, having committed their whole lives to a body of religious doctrine, have strong emotions about their religious beliefs. The last two observations set religious philosophers of religion apart from other groups of philosophers – from, say, four-dimensionalist metaphysicians.162

The first and second reasons do nothing to distinguish Christian philosophers of religion from secular philosophers, since four-dimensionalists are every bit as sophisticated as Christian philosophers and so should suffer from cognitive biases respecting arguments in support of and against a tenseless theory of time just as Christian philosophers do respecting arguments in their field. The whole weight therefore falls on the third point. Although Draper and Nichols argue persuasively that “there are good reasons to believe that the emotional attachments that many religious philosophers have to their religious groups are exceptionally strong,” they fail to provide any evidence that “such influence is especially harmful to inquiry in philosophy of religion.”163

In response to the “repeatedly voiced” objection that “inquiry across the whole landscape of philosophy is just as biased as inquiry in philosophy of religion,” they flatly deny it, since it is “based only on the ‘impression’ of the objector.”164 It is, however, a good impression, supported by various examples and the studies cited showing cognitive bias to be universal. Contrary to Draper and Nichols, none of the studies cited showed cognitive bias to be a peculiar problem of Christian philosophy of religion or “much more

damaging to inquiry in philosophy of religion than to inquiry in most other areas of philosophy."165

The question whether cognitive bias is especially harmful raises the question of what exactly the problem of cognitive bias is supposed to be. As Draper and Nichols recognize, bias does nothing to affect the soundness or cogency of the arguments under consideration.166 To object to a person's argument because he is biased is to be guilty of argument ad hominem. Sometimes Draper and Nichols speak of bias as harmful to philosophical inquiry. Presumably the problem is that biased people will be less likely to arrive at a correct assessment of the arguments. But given that we all suffer from cognitive biases, why not simply admit the fact and then do our best to give an objective assessment of the arguments? If we fail, we can rely on our interlocutors to point out the deficiencies of our arguments.

In fact, just as Erasmus spoke in praise of folly, there are, surprisingly perhaps, some positive benefits arising from cognitive bias. Some of the studies cited by Draper and Nichols reveal that bias can abet careful assessment of arguments. "Participants did not ignore counterevidence to their convictions; instead they thoroughly, carefully criticized such evidence. Participants on both sides did not reason impartially, weighing the evidence on both sides independent of their own commitments. Instead, they critically considered the opposite theory more carefully in order to buffer counterevidence with consonant information."167 So long as bias does not lead to dishonest practices – which does not seem to be the case for religious bias168 – it can thus be philosophically productive. Second, bias can make an inquirer more invested in his arguments and in the refutation of opposing arguments, thereby promoting philosophical inquiry. In response to the objection "that 'motivated cognition' is more likely to lead to original and sophisticated arguments than cognition that is less 'passionate,'" Draper and Nichols challenge "the unsupported assumption that more effort will inevitably be devoted to passionate rationalization than to the dispassionate pursuit of truth."169 Despite the tendentious re-phrasing of the

assumption, it is hard to see why it is any less supported than Draper and Nichols' claim of peculiar bias among philosophers of religion on the basis of their commonsensical arguments. Indeed, their very claim that emotional investment in a cause due to religious affiliation greatly augments cognitive bias also suggests that such motivated cognition is apt to be more fruitful than dispassionate inquiry. Examples of such motivated cognition are not difficult to find: according Draper and Nichols the amazing edifice of Alvin Plantinga's religious epistemology is the result of cognitive bias! Draper and Nichols also respond that "producing philosophically sophisticated arguments is not the only criterion of health in philosophy. Objectivity, though inevitably limited, is itself valuable."170 Of course, objectivity is a virtue, but the fact remains that producing philosophically sophisticated arguments is far more fruitful. Thus, cognitive bias can have beneficial effects.

Moreover, why must Christian philosophers or any philosophers consider arguments "independent of their own commitments"? As mentioned above, we are within our epistemic rights to philosophize from our openly acknowledged point of view and then do our best at assessment of arguments. Draper and Nichols note that "According to philosophers of religion in the Reformed tradition, all academic disciplines … are inherently perspectival. On this postmodern theory of the academy, what we called partisanship or narrowness of focus is arguably just objective inquiry from a perspective and so is normal, healthy, and inevitable."171 They admit that "There is something right about this objection. There is no 'view from nowhere' from which philosophy can be pursued."172 But, they insist, "Even if philosophy is perspectival, however, surely the relevant 'perspectives' are broad traditions of inquiry, not narrow sectarian religious (or antireligious) outlooks."173 But surely Christian theism is a broad enough perspective from which to work! Moreover, I see no reason to think that one is debarred from philosophizing from, say, a Thomist perspective.

Finally, Draper and Nichols respond to the objection that their argument is self-refuting, since it, too, is the result of cognitive bias.

They reply, “we may very well have biases concerning religion, but this paper does not defend our religious beliefs.”174 This reply fails to alleviate the worry. For the cited “studies support the view that human beings are biased in the evaluation of counterevidence to their preferred beliefs,” and Draper and Nichols’ paper certainly expresses their preferred beliefs. Indeed, their religious beliefs and biases cannot be concealed: they explicitly reject biblical authority, prize Rudolf Otto’s apostatizing over his inflexible Lutheran orthodoxy, demean Reformed Epistemology, and show no concern for what Plantinga calls “the battle for men’s souls.” These are unjustified biases that guide their inquiry. Indeed, it is striking and ironic that Draper and Nichols’ paper does not follow their own prescription to Christian philosophers for reducing bias by using “argument construction less often as a method for making cases for the positions they hold, and more often as a method of testing those positions,”175 but is instead a piece of apologetics, a discipline from which they urge philosophers of religion “to distance themselves in every way possible” because it is “antithetical to objective philosophical inquiry” and “inevitably biased.”176

Thomas Flint observes:

In recent years, a major change has occurred among those scholars who take both their Christianity and their philosophy seriously. Gone, it seems, are the days when Christians engaged in philosophy were tacitly expected to bracket their religious beliefs when exploring philosophical topics other than, perhaps, those in the philosophy of religion. Gone, too, are the days when the philosophy of religion itself was broadly viewed as involving little more than recapitulations of timeworn arguments for and against the existence of God and lengthy (some might say interminable) discussions of the nature of religious language. By and large, Christians who are also philosophers have come to view these distinctively modern restrictions upon investigating the relations between their religious and philosophical beliefs as both artificial and detrimental to their

attempts to fashion a unified picture of the world. They have come to see themselves as, perhaps even primarily as, engaged in what can most properly be called Christian philosophy.177

What Tillich dismissed as a dream has now become a reality.178 What, then of the three divergences between philosophy and theology identified by Tillich? As for the first, the detached objectivity, the standpoint which is no standpoint, which supposedly characterizes philosophy but not theology is a self-delusion. In the aftermath of classical foundationalism's collapse, says Stump, postmodernism has made everyone self-conscious about the way in which claims to rely only on universal and impartial reason are unrealistic.179 One need not embrace postmodern relativism, she says, to recognize that postmodernists are surely right that everyone begins with some authorities, some testimony accepted on trust, some unexamined set of presuppositions. By the same token, the philosophical theologian is not blinded by bias but, as anyone familiar with current philosophy of religion can testify, is characterized by a commitment to objectivity and very rigorous standards of argument.180 As for the second alleged divergence, we have seen that the use of purely secular basic sources of knowledge is nothing more than a methodological disposition that the Christian philosopher is free to reject. Indeed, one of the most significant movements within contemporary Christian philosophy has been the flourishing of so-called Reformed epistemology, which postulates other basic sources of knowledge in addition to those recognized by classical foundationalists.181 Finally, with respect to the third supposed divergence, it is striking that some of the questions that Tillich says that the theologian alone pursues, such as the reality of a prima causa, time and eternity, self-estrangement, and so on, are questions pursued by philosophers. The lines of demarcation have been erased, so that speaking of a Christian philosophy of religion is no contradiction.

2.5.5 Summary

It is very difficult therefore to discern any difference in principle between the Christian philosopher of religion and the Christian systematic theologian. Apart from apologetics, they handle the same subject matter and do so with the same basic sources of knowledge. So how should they be distinguished? David Shatz notes that unlike largely descriptive disciplines like history or sociology, philosophy is primarily an evaluative discipline. “It is not at all the case… that philosophy of religion is exclusively an evaluative enterprise, with no descriptive aspect at all. But it is the case that the philosopher is interested in empirical findings for the sake of answering a larger question. The philosopher wants to know what empirical findings tell us about whether the claims of religion are true and/or rational.”182 He says, “Alone among the disciplines, it tries to see whether belief in God and other religious beliefs are supported by good reasons or whether, to the contrary, there are good reasons to deny the claims of religion (for example, if some of these claims contradict each other).”183 This characterization suggests that Christian philosophy of religion will overlap with positive apologetics, as arguments for God’s existence and arguments for Christian theism are evaluated. There is no doubt that such an interest does characterize philosophy of religion. I have argued, on the other hand, that systematic theology does not overlap natural theology and Christian evidences and that the systematic theologian need not take up the task of positive Christian apologetics. But the line of demarcation is not fixed and impassable. Many philosophers of religion have no interest in natural theology but are occupied, for example, with evaluative, philosophical analysis of key theological concepts, while nothing prevents the systematic theologian from discussing arguments for God’s existence should he wish. Neither is required to assess the arguments, and neither is prohibited. Christian philosophy of religion and Christian systematic theology seem to be very much the same.

Back in the early 1960s H. H. Price quipped, “A clergyman, we think, ought to give up his job if he does not believe in God. It almost seems that the philosopher ought to give up his if he does.”184 The

situation has so changed today that the philosopher certainly, if not the clergyman, may keep his job.

3 Truth in Theology

I have characterized systematic theology as propositional in nature, involving the formulation of a logically coherent worldview that takes into account what we learn from all our basic sources of knowledge. Accordingly, systematic theology is both truth-apt and aimed, at least, at truth.

The biblical conception of truth is quite multifaceted. The Bible typically uses the words “true” or “truth” in non-philosophical senses to indicate such qualities as fidelity, moral rectitude, reality, and so forth. Occasionally, however, the Scriptures speak of truth in the more philosophical sense of veracity, and, of course, the biblical writers everywhere presuppose that what they are writing is true in this same sense, that is, that they are not writing falsehoods. So Christian theology certainly has a stake in the philosophical conception of truth.

That being so, however, it remains the case that there is no peculiarly Christian theory of truth. This is just as it should be, for if Christianity presented a distinctive definition and standards of truth, then its claim to be true would be circular or system-dependent and therefore trivial. But the Christian faith means to commend itself in the marketplace of ideas. The Christian faith claims to be true in the common, ordinary sense of that word and leaves the enunciation of a more careful definition to the philosophers. Thus, when philosophers formulate various theories of truth, such as the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth, or the existence theory of truth, none of these can be christened as the Christian Theory of Truth, and there have been Christian philosophers among the adherents of each one.

3.1 Truth as Correspondence

Since truth is one of the central and largest subjects in philosophy,185 our remarks here can be only cursory. Whatever theory of truth one adopts, we shall want to affirm that truth entails correspondence with reality. This insight goes back to Aristotle and beyond. According to Aristotle, “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false; while to say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true.”186 Aristotle is here providing the conditions under which something is truly asserted, rather than giving a definition of truth itself, and his enormously influential characterization seems quite correct. During the Middle Ages, philosophers addressed the question of truth more directly, Thomas Aquinas characterizing truth as the correlation of intellect and reality. In other words, if reality is as the intellect judges it to be, then truth is a quality inhering both in the judgement and in the intellect itself. Among contemporary correspondence theorists, truth is likewise conceived as a property of either sentences or propositions which correspond to the world as it actually is. Thus, for example, the statement “Snow is white” is true if and only if snow is white. Such an understanding of truth, even if not taught by the Bible, seems wholly compatible with biblical ideas about truth and very plausible, if not obvious, in its own right.

It is often asserted that a view of truth as correspondence entails that truth is a substantial property involving a word-world relation between the singular terms of a true sentence and mind-independent objects in the world. Michael Devitt provides a particularly clear statement of this claim:

Consider a true sentence with a very simple structure: the predication ‘a is F.’ This sentence is true in virtue of the fact that there exists an object which ‘a’ designates and which is among the objects ‘F’ applies to. So this sentence is true because it has a predicational structure containing words standing in certain

referential relations to parts of reality and because of the way that reality is. Provided that the reality is objective and mind-independent, then the sentence is correspondence-true: its truth has all the features that we have just abstracted from classical discussions.187

Such an understanding of truth as correspondence is, however, outrageously inflationary and threatens to saddle us with all sorts of unwanted ontological commitments. For example, the truth of “God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and wickedness of men” would prima facie require that there are objects in the world like wrath, unrighteousness, and wickedness. Fortunately, taking truth to be the property of corresponding with reality does not require the sort of word-world relation that Devitt imagines. Far too many philosophers, it seems, are still in the thrall of a sort of picture theory of language according to which singular terms in true sentences must have corresponding objects in the world.188 Such a view is quite mistaken.189 It is a datum of ordinary language that we frequently assert true statements which contain singular terms that do not denote existent objects. Consider the following examples:

The weather in Atlanta will be hot today.

Sherrie’s disappointment with her husband was deep and unassuageable.

The price of the tickets is ten dollars.

Wednesday falls between Tuesday and Thursday.

His sincerity was touching.

James couldn’t pay his mortgage.

The view of the Jezreel Valley from atop Mt. Carmel was breathtaking.

Your constant complaining is futile.

Spassky’s forfeiture ended the match.

He did it for my sake and the children's.

It would be fantastic to think that all of the singular terms featured in these plausibly true sentences have objects in the world corresponding to them. Examples like these are legion. In fact, I suspect that singular terms which refer to real world objects may actually be the exception rather than the rule in ordinary language.

The unit of correspondence, so to speak, need not be thought of as individual words or other sub-sentential expressions.190 Rather correspondence may be taken to obtain between a sentence as a whole and the world. ~~Such holistic correspondence is in line with Alfred Tarski's famous T-schema stating a material condition on any theory of truth:~~

~~T. "S" is true iff S.~~

~~So according to (T), "Snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white~~.

3.2 A Deflationary View of Truth

According to a deflationary view of truth, that is all that the notion of truth as correspondence amounts to. So, in Jody Azzouni's words, "the deflationist theory of truths … denies that there can be any useful categorizations of truths in terms of substantial truth properties."191 The key to Azzouni's claim is obviously the adjective "substantial," for it is easy to think of insubstantial properties which all true statements have in virtue of being true, for example, being believed by God. As an omniscient being, God has the property of knowing only and all truths, so that every true statement has the property known by God. But that need not be taken to be a substantial property of true statements in a theory of truth. Similarly, every true statement has the property of corresponding with reality in

the sense mentioned above, but that hardly seems a substantial property of such statements. It is trivial that a statement “S” is true if and only if what “S” states is the case.192

As Azzouni emphasizes, one can, by and large, eliminate the truth predicate simply by semantically descending from speaking of the truth of S to simply asserting S itself. So rather than assert that “It was true during the early universe that no sentient life existed,” we can just assert, “During the early universe no sentient life existed,” a view that Azzouni calls semantic descent deflationism. In Azzouni’s view instances of the T-schema merely illustrate how the predicate “true” functions as a device of semantic ascent, enabling us to talk of the truth of a statement in place of asserting it. It is “a device that correlates statements with nominalizations – descriptions or names – of those statements, so that statements containing the latter descriptions or names can stand stead for the statements themselves.”193

Why is a device of semantic ascent useful or needed in natural languages? Why not just embrace a redundancy theory of truth, which treats the truth-predicate as superfluous? The answer, says Azzouni, is that the truth-predicate serves the purpose of blind truth ascriptions. In many cases we find ourselves unable to assert the proposition or propositions said to be true because we are incapable of rehearsing them due to their sheer numerosity, as in “Everything the Pope has said is true,” or because we are ignorant of the relevant propositions, as in “Everything stated in the classified documents is true.” In theory even blind truth ascriptions are dispensable if we substitute for them infinite disjunctions or conjunctions like “Either p or q or r or … .” While such infinite disjunctions and conjunctions are unknowable by us, they are known to an omniscient deity, so that God has no need of blind truth ascriptions. Hence, he has no need of semantic ascent and, hence, no need of the truth-predicate, which underlines the fact that such ascriptions are not ascriptions of a substantial truth property.

3.3 Truth and Truthmakers

Azzouni, however, thinks that a deflationary view of truth is incompatible with truth as correspondence because he closely connects a view of truth as correspondence with so-called truthmaker theory. He asserts, “Whether truths share some relational property or other – for example, correspondence, coherence, etc. – or whether they don’t, turns on issues about the nature of the grounds of truths: What it is – if anything – that makes statements true.”194 Azzouni thinks that a statement corresponds to reality only if the statement’s truthmakers are the denotations of the singular terms employed (or the values of variables bound by the existential quantifier) in that statement. But Azzouni’s assumption seems to be unjustified for two reasons.

First, if the unit of correspondence is entire statements, then correspondence does not require that a statement’s truthmakers be the objects referred to or quantified over in the statement. For example, the statement “John couldn’t pay his mortgage” is true and so corresponds to reality, but its truthmakers will not include a socially constructed non-entity like a mortgage. Truthmaker proponents like John Heil and Heather Dyke have similarly emphasized that the truthmakers of a sentence need not be the referents of the singular terms in the sentence. Dyke calls the assumption that descriptions of reality generate a metaphysics “the representational fallacy.” It is a fallacy because “Just knowing that a sentence is true does not tell you what makes it true.”195 She notes that if the sentence, not the word, is the primary bearer of meaning, we do not have to accept that there is some entity which is the referent of every word.196 She maintains merely that if a domain of discourse includes true sentences, then there is something about the world that constitutes the truthmaker for those sentences. So in her view, for example, one cannot infer the reality of mathematical objects from true mathematical sentences, and it remains an open question what the truthmakers for mathematical theories are.197

Thus, the failure of a sentence's singular terms to have real world referents does not imply that such a sentence is not a true description of reality and so fails to correspond to reality.

Second, not all statements corresponding to reality need have truthmakers. Truthmaker maximalism is a controversial doctrine with which the deflationary theorist need not be burdened.198 Trenton Merricks has argued persuasively that at most only truths about what properties are actually had by actually existing things must have truthmakers.199 He furnishes a good number of exceptions to the doctrine of truthmaker maximalism, such as negative existentials and universal generalizations like "Hobbits do not exist" and "All ravens are black," moral truths like "Innocent persons ought not to be tortured," tensed truths like "The Trojans were defeated," modal truths like "There might have been a dozen more fundamental particles," counterfactuals of freedom like "If agent S were in circumstances C, he would freely do action A," and dispositional truths like "If this glass were struck, it would shatter."200 Merricks concludes, "Some truths are not true in virtue of how they are related to any existing entity or entities. So we should reject any theory of truth that implies that every truth is true in virtue of how it is related to some existing entity or entities."201 Still, it seems obvious that such truths do tell us about how the world is and so can be said to correspond with reality. In rejecting a correspondence theory of truth, Merricks, like Azzouni, seems to be presupposing a view of correspondence according to which terms used successfully to refer must have real world objects corresponding to them.202 But if we adopt a deflationary theory of reference, then, as Merricks' examples illustrate, truths corresponding to reality need not have truthmakers at all.

3.4 Modern and Post-Modern Denials of Theological Truth

So what contribution does Christian theology have to make to a discussion about truth? It tells us specifically that we can truly assert

things about God, and this is not trivial. For certain schools of modern and post-modern thought deny that there are any objective theological truths. Atheists and theists may disagree as to which propositions about God are true or false – the theist holding that the proposition God exists has the value true and the atheist holding that this proposition has the value false – but at least both agree that there are propositions about God and that these are not truth valueless. Some schools of modern and post-modern thought, however, do not concur.

3.4.1 Verificationism

Consider, for example, the challenge of Verificationism, to which we have already alluded. During the heyday of Logical Positivism in the thirties and forties, it was widely thought among philosophers that there are no propositions about God, that sentences including the word “God” are in fact meaningless, in the sense that they make no assertion but are employed merely to express the user’s attitudes and emotions. According the Positivists’ Verification Principle of Meaning, which went through a number of revisions, an informative sentence in order to be meaningful must be capable in principle of being empirically verified.203 Since theological statements could not be empirically verified, they were regarded as factually vacuous. Now it hardly needs to be said that such an interpretation of theological discourse represents neither the viewpoint of the biblical writers nor of the common religious believer. They typically mean by their religious statements precisely what those statements appear to assert, for example, the statement “God created the world” is an assertion that God created the world.

Fortunately, it was soon discovered that the Verification Principle would force us to dismiss as meaningless not only theological statements, but also a great many scientific statements – along with ethical, aesthetic, and metaphysical statements as well –, so that the Principle was wholly unreasonable. Even more fundamentally, it was realized that the Principle was self-refuting. The sentence “An

informative, meaningful sentence must be capable in principle of being empirically verified" is not itself capable of being empirically verified. The Verification Principle is therefore by its own criterion a meaningless combination of words, which need hardly detain the theist, or at best an arbitrary definition, which the theist is at liberty to reject. Therefore, Logical Positivism and its Verification Principle have been almost totally abandoned by philosophers, though it is surprising the degree to which the positivistic attitude persists in some non-philosophical fields, particularly among scientists who were educated during the positivist era.204

3.4.2 Mystical Anti-Realism

A second denial of theological truth comes from the quarter of Eastern mysticism and its Western progeny. According to this perspective, which we may call Mystical Anti-Realism, there are propositions about God all right, but they are not truth-apt; they are all of them truth valueless. Thus, propositions expressed by sentences like "God exists," "God is good," or "The world was created by God" are neither true nor false, having no truth value. God is said to transcend all categories of human thought and language, so that it is quite impossible to assert any truths about God, as Christian theology pretends to do. Indeed, we should not even speak of God, but use instead some non-descript designation for the ultimate reality, such as "The Real."205

Unfortunately, it is far from clear what is meant by the Mystical Anti-Realist claim that God is "above human thought and language." Perhaps the best sense that we can make of this claim is that what logicians call the Principle of Bivalence fails to be valid for propositions about God.206 The Principle of Bivalence states that for any proposition p, p is either true or false. The Principle is very closely related to the Law of Excluded Middle, one of the famous three "laws of thought," which states that for any proposition p and its negation not-p, either p is true or not- p is true. The claim under

consideration is that propositions referring to God are neither true nor false.

Now on the face of it such a claim is bewildering, for it seems absurd to say that a logical contradiction is not false. But on this view a proposition like God both exists and does not exist is not false. Neither is it true that God either exists or does not exist. Such propositions seem to be necessarily true. On this basis alone the Mystical Anti-Realist claim ought to be rejected. It avails the Mystical Anti-Realist nothing to deny in reply the Law of Contradiction, for if the Law fails, then falsity of the Law would not preclude its truth. The objector must assume that if the Law is false, it is not also true, which just is to affirm the Law. Thus, in the very denial of the Law one affirms it, so that one's position is self-defeating.207 The problem is not that the objector's denial is logically inconsistent, but rather that the denial refutes itself.

Moreover, the Mystical Anti-Realist claim itself is self-refuting. Consider the statement "The Real is identical to the God of the Bible." Since the Principle of Bivalence fails for propositions about the Real, this statement cannot be true. But neither is it supposed to be false. But how could it not be false? For the God of the Bible can be described by bivalent propositions, like "God is just," "God is good," "God created the world." But the Real cannot be described by bivalent propositions. So given the indiscernibility of identicals, the Real cannot be identical to the God of the Bible. But if the Real is not identical to the God of the Bible, then it is true that "The Real is not identical to the God of the Bible," which is a bivalent statement about the Real. But Mystical Anti-Realism says that there are no bivalent propositions about the Real. So the position is logically self-refuting.

Perhaps the Mystical Anti-Realist will try to save his position by denying that the Real cannot be described by bivalent propositions. After all, the Principle of Bivalence fails for this proposition as it does for others about the Real. But how can the Mystical Anti-Realist coherently deny that the Real cannot be described by bivalent propositions while affirming that the Principle of Bivalence fails for

propositions about the Real, since these two statements are synonymous and so express the same proposition?

Suppose the Mystical Anti-Realist says that neither the statement "The Real is identical to the God of the Bible" nor the statement "The Real is not identical to the God of the Bible" is true. What, then, of the statement "The Real is identical to the Real"? Some mystical Anti-Realists grant that such purely formal statements are true of the Real. But this is fatal to the position. For then the sentence "The Real is identical to x" is satisfied by the Real but is not satisfied by the God of the Bible. So the Real and the God of the Bible cannot be identical. But then it is true that "The Real is not identical to the God of the Bible," which is a bivalent statement about God.

On the other hand, if the Mystical Anti-Realist denies that it is true that "The Real is identical with the Real," then by the same token neither is it false that "The Real is not identical with the Real." The Mystical Anti-Realist has thus denied the Law of Identity as well as the Law of Contradiction, the most basic laws of logic, so that his position is irremediably logically incoherent.

The Anti-Realist might retort that the above only shows that rational paradox is inevitable when we try to talk about God. But that is not the case. So long as we respect the Principle of Bivalence we can discourse perfectly coherently about God. What is incoherent is the Anti-Realist's denial of the validity of the Principle for propositions about God. His position is analogous to other self-refuting affirmations like Only verifiable propositions are meaningful (itself an unverifiable proposition). The one who denies that the Principle of Bivalence is valid for propositions about God is in the very denial affirming a bivalent proposition about God. It is not God that is the source of the incoherence, but merely the objector's view itself.

In any case, it is clear that no reasons can be offered for adopting the view that the Principle of Bivalence is not valid for propositions about God. For any purported reason for adopting this view would involve affirming certain truths about God, which the position prohibits. For example, if it is said that the Principle fails because

“God is too great to be grasped by human categories of thought” or “God is wholly other,” or “God transcends human language,” then all of these are bivalent propositions about God. But the position holds that there are no bivalent propositions about God. Thus, none of these statements can be true and so can furnish no grounds for adopting the position in question. The position can be embraced only by an arational leap of faith. But surely, as rational men and women, we ought to be extremely reluctant to commit intellectual suicide for no reason whatsoever when it comes to theology. In the absence of any reason to abandon rational thought in this realm, we ought to continue to employ the rational canons of thought which have proved so fruitful in other disciplines.

3.4.3 Radical Pluralism

A final contemporary attack on theological truth as the Christian understands it is what we might call Radical Pluralism. With roots in Eastern mysticism and radically individualized through the influence of Kant’s Critical Philosophy, this view holds that each individual constitutes reality himself, so that there is no trans-subjective truth about the way the world is. On this view, the popular expression “It may be true for you, but it’s not true for me” is quite literally correct. At face value, such a view may seem patently absurd: whether we believe the stove burner is on or not, for example, if we put our hand on it and it is on, we shall be burned. It is objectively true that the burner is hot, regardless of our subjective attitude toward it. Similarly, there were surely events going on before we were born which are entirely independent of us: the Big Bang, the era of galaxy formation, the age of the dinosaurs, and so forth. But these absurdities result because we are still thinking of an objective reality and trying to marry subjectivism to it. According to Radical Pluralism, there is no objective reality; there is no overarching way the world is. The world has fallen apart and has been replaced by the world-for-me.

This Radical Pluralism is antithetical to the Christian world view because Christianity ascribes to God a privileged position as the

knower of all truth. He stands, as it were, at the pinnacle of the pyramid of diverse perspectives on the world and in the unity of his intellect grasps the world as it is. There is thus on the Christian perspective a unity to truth and reality which is known by God. Radical Pluralists thus often see their task as overtly anti-theological in character. For example, literary critic Roland Barthes writes:

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final significance, to close the writing … . In precisely this way literature… by refusing to assign … an ultimate meaning to the text (and to the world as text) liberates what may be called an antitheological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law.208

It is intriguing that according to Radical Pluralism reason, science, and law are to be rejected along with God. Radical Pluralism thus threatens not merely theology but every discipline at the university.

Radical Pluralism is attended by relativism. Since every person creates his own reality, moral values become radically individualized. Reacting to Richard Rorty's view that truth is whatever my colleagues will let me get away with, Plantinga muses that since we have different colleagues, truth on this view is pluralistic because your colleagues may not let you get away with the same things that my colleagues let me get away with. Plantinga responds:

Although this view is very much au courant and with-it in the contemporary intellectual world, it has consequences that are peculiar, not to say preposterous. For example, most of us think that the Chinese authorities did something monstrous in murdering those hundreds of young people in Tiananmen Square, and then compounded their wickedness by denying that they had done it. On Rorty's view, however, this is an uncharitable misunderstanding. What the authorities were really doing, in denying that they had

murdered those students, was something wholly praiseworthy: they were trying to bring it about that the alleged massacre never happened. For they were trying to see to it that their peers would let them get away with saying that the massacre never happened; that is, they were trying to make it true that it never happened; and who can fault them for that? The same goes for those contemporary neo-Nazis who claim that there was no holocaust; from a Rortian view, they are only trying to see to it that such a terrible thing never happened; and what could be more commendable than that? This way of thinking has real possibilities for dealing with poverty and disease: if only we let each other get away with saying that there isn't any poverty and disease – no cancer or AIDS, let's say – then it would be true that there isn't any; and if it were true that there isn't any, then of course there wouldn't be any.209

The serious point of Plantinga's satirical critique is the sinister nature of Radical Pluralism. Since there is no objective truth, reality is what each individual makes it. In the absence of objective truth, there is nothing to check the unbridled will to power.

Fortunately, Radical Pluralism also seems to be self-refuting. We need only ask ourselves, "Is Radical Pluralism objectively true?" It claims that "There is no objective truth about the world"; but that statement purports itself to be an objective truth about the world. It says that "Each individual constitutes reality, so that there is no objective reality"; but that is itself a statement about objective reality. It states that the proposition Truth is pluralistic is objectively true.

The Radical Pluralist cannot escape this incoherence by saying that it is only from his perspective that there is no objective truth about the world. For if that is true only from his perspective, that fact does not preclude that there is objective truth about the world, in which case his perspective is objectively false. If he replies that it is only from someone else's perspective that there is objective truth about the world, then it follows that all truth is perspectival, or that Radical Pluralism is objectively true, which is incoherent.

3.5 Summary

In summary, while Christian theology does not propound a particular theory of truth, it is wholly compatible with the traditional correspondence view of truth. The Christian worldview purports to describe reality as it is and therefore to be true. The challenges posed to theological truth by Verificationism, Mystical Anti-Realism, and Radical Pluralism are all ultimately self-defeating and incoherent. Therefore, the task of systematic philosophical theology need not be stymied by them.

4 The Organizational Structure of Systematic Philosophical Theology

Part of what makes any theology systematic, we have said, is that it exhibits a certain organization or structure, typically along certain themes. To borrow a metaphor, systematic theology attempts to carve theology at its joints.210 The location of those joints has historically been fairly clear, depending upon how fine one wishes to carve.211 Origen's On First Principles is divided into four books, dealing respectively with God, the world, freedom, and revelation. These are broad categories, the book on the world, for example, including Christology and the book on freedom including eschatology. Lombard similarly divided his Sentences into four books, treating respectively the Trinity, creation, Christology, and the sacraments and eschatology. Bonaventure's Breviloquium (Brief Reading) (ca. 1257) carves his subject matter more finely into a prologue and seven sections handling the Trinity, creation, sin, Christ, salvation, the sacraments, and eschatology. By contrast, Aquinas' massive and unfinished Summa theologiae is divided into three parts, each enormous in extent: part I handles the doctrine of God in 119 questions, part II treats the doctrine of man in two parts

of 114 questions and 189 questions each, and part III deals with soteriology, including Christology, in 90 questions before breaking off unfinished.

The Protestant Reformers brought tremendous advance to the structuring of systematic theology. Philip Melanchthon in his Loci communes (1521) introduced use of the “common places” or main topics of Protestant systematic theology to structure his work. In subsequent editions of this book until the final edition of the Loci praecipui theologici in 1559, the loci were greatly refined and expanded. Although shunned by Roman Catholic theologians, the use of the loci communes to organize systematic theology became standard practice among Lutheran and Reformed theologians. Standard loci included such topics as De Deo (God), De creatione (creation), De Christo (Christ), De homine (man), De gratia (grace), De ecclesia (church), and De novissimus (last things). These topics are the subject matter of various sub-disciplines in theology such as theology proper, cosmology, Christology, anthropology, soteriology, and so on. John Webster explains that the typical order of the topics emerges from two principles: (i) that the theme of Christian teaching is God and then things in relation to God, and (ii) that Christian teaching is best ordered by the sequence of the divine economy, in which God’s relation to creatures is unfolded, a sequence set out in Scripture and confessed in the creeds.212 “Attending to these principles… yields an outline in which systematic theology begins with a substantial presentation of the doctrine of God … followed by an account of the history of God’s relations to creatures, usually in some combination of episodic and thematic treatment.”213

In this work I shall structure our discussion along the lines of the traditionally arranged loci communes, since they seem to carve theology at its joints, thereby providing great clarity and thematic unity to our discussion. Since our emphasis is on philosophical theology, our discussion of various loci will be disproportionate due both to their varying intrinsic philosophical interest and particularly to this author’s varying philosophical interests. Thus, I shall have a great deal to say, for example, about the doctrine of God but, I

anticipate, relatively little about ecclesiology and eschatology. My main departure from the traditional loci will be in treating the Doctrine of Scripture (De Scriptura sacra) and the relationship between faith and reason (De fide), not in the Prolegomena, but as part of the loci themselves. These seem to me to be among the important themes treated by systematic theology rather than part of a prologue to it. Accordingly, I have limited my Prolegomena to introductory or background matters.

In arranging the order of the loci, I have followed what one might call an epistemic rather than ontic ordering, beginning, not with God as the source of all reality other than himself, but with Scripture as providing us the normative content of the Christian religion and the basis for our philosophical reflection upon the content of revelation. It would seem to be out of joint to begin, for example, with a discussion of God's attributes as given in the Bible without having first discussed why we are looking to the Bible as a source of information about God. Thereafter, there is a sort of logical order to the loci following the unfolding of God's plan for creation and for the salvation and beatification of mankind.214

Notes

1 By "contemporary" I mean within roughly the last one hundred years, since many of us working today were contemporaries of those who wrote during that time. On this understanding works such as Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics count as contemporary systematic theologies. Historically speaking, the first systematic philosophical theology was Origen's Peri archōn [On First Principles], written in the third century. Peter Lombard's Sententiarum libri IV [Four Books of Sentences] (ca. 1150) set the model for medieval treatments. The preeminent work in systematic philosophical theology was

undoubtedly Thomas Aquinas' massive Summa theologiae (Summary of Theology) (1265–74). Outstanding among Protestant thinkers was Francis Turretin's Institutio theologiae elencticae (Institutes of Elenctic Theology) (1679–85).

2 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994–1997). Tillich offered an “ontological definition of philosophy” which takes philosophy to be basically metaphysics. Just as philosophy deals with the question of being in terms of categories, structural laws, and universal concepts, so theology, when dealing with our ultimate concern, presupposes in every sentence the structure of being, its categories, laws, and concepts. “On every page of every religious or theological text these concepts appear: time, space, cause, thing, subject, nature, movement, freedom, necessity, life, value, knowledge, experience, being, and not being… . Therefore, the systematic theologian must be a philosopher in critical understanding even if not in creative power” (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1. 21). Pannenberg is explicit: “A specific interpretation of the relationship of theology to philosophy fully and unmistakably informs this presentation of Christian doctrine… . in my view the first task of a philosophical theology is to fix its intellectual point of departure in the historical revelation of God” (Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:xii).

3 Even prior to their completion, Swinburne's seven volumes were being compared to Aquinas' Summa theologiae (Philip L. Quinn, “Swinburne on Guilt, Atonement, and Christian Redemption,” in Reason and the Christian Religion: Essays in Honor of Richard Swinburne, ed. Alan G. Padgett [Oxford: Clarendon, 1994], 277). Swinburne's trilogy in natural theology includes The Coherence of Theism, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); The Existence of God, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), and Faith and Reason, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); while his tetralogy comprises Responsibility and Atonement (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007); The Christian God (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Providence and the Problem of Evil (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Among contemporary systematic philosophical theologies one might mention as well Norman Geisler's Systematic Theology, 4 vols. (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002–2005).

4 For example, Stephen T. Davis, Christian Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Oliver D. Crisp, Analyzing Doctrine: Toward a Systematic Theology (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019); Sarah Coakley, God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay ‘On the Trinity' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

5 Paul Benacerraf, “What Mathematical Truth Could Not Be–I,” in The Philosophy of Mathematics Today, ed. Matthias Schirn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 42.

6 Benacerraf, “What Mathematical Truth Could Not Be,” 42.

7 Benacerraf, “What Mathematical Truth Could Not Be,” 42.

8 A. J. Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology,” chap. 6 in Language, Truth, and Logic (New York: Dover Publications, 1952).

9 Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, 115.

10 Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, 119.

11 Charles Taliaferro explains that critics of positivism “argued that meaning was prior to verification; you have first to grasp the meaning of a proposition before grasping what conditions would confirm or disconfirm it. This line of reasoning was designed to pry apart the positivist charge that meaning and verifiability were somehow conceptually united” (Charles Taliaferro, Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion since the Seventeenth Century, The Evolution of Modern Philosophy [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 351).

12 Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Then, Now, and Al,” Faith and Philosophy 28, no. 3 (2011): 256.

13 Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, 107.

14 Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, 108.

15 Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, 113.

16 I do not mean to suggest that philosophers of religion were absent from the scene during this time. See Eugene Thomas Long, Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion 1900–2000, Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy of Religion 1 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000). In 1957 Elton Trueblood could speak of “an astonishing amount of vigorous religious thinking,” exemplified by Whitehead, Temple, Maritain, Tillich, Niebuhr, and many more,” and of “the phenomenal new burst of religious interest in American colleges and universities” (David Elton Trueblood, Philosophy of Religion [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957], xi, 3). But I think it would be fair to say that these thinkers lay outside the dominant mainstream of analytic Anglo–American philosophy. Dean Zimmerman reminds us that during the period of positivist rule, “an indomitable little group” of analytic British philosophers and theologians such as F. R. Tennant, Austin Farrer, A. C. Ewing, H. H. Price, Ian Ramsey, H. D. Lewis, Basil Mitchell, and a few others carried on with philosophical theology as usual (Dean Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” in Persons: Human and Divine, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman, [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007], 1–13). What is remarkable about the recent renaissance of Christian philosophy is that it has arisen wholly within the mainstream analytic tradition.

17 Gilbert Ryle, “Final Discussion,” in The Nature of Metaphysics, ed. D. F. Pears (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 159–60. I am indebted to Charles Taliaferro for this reference. Note that Ryle does not attribute the tepid state of philosophical-theological dialogue so much to philosophy as to theology, whose flames had died down. Gordon Graham rightly observes that the divorce between theology and philosophy was not only advocated by logical positivists and existentialists from the philosophical side but was insisted upon by the highly influential theology of Karl Barth from the side of theology

(Gordon Graham, “Philosophy,” in The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 514). Thus, says Carl Henry, dialectical-existential theology was “powerless to withstand the onslaught of naturalistic secularism and logical positivism, which take the dialectical-existential disavowal of valid cognitive claims for deity as confirmatory evidence that theology is nonsense” (Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, vol. 1, God Who Speaks and Shows: Preliminary Considerations [Waco, TX: Word, 1976], 188).

18 See Paul M. van Buren, The Secular Meaning of the Gospel: Based on an Analysis of Its Language (New York: Macmillan, 1963); Thomas J. J. Altizer, The Gospel of Christian Atheism (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).

19 For discussion see my Time and the Metaphysics of Relativity, Philosophical Studies Series 84 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 139–148.

20 John Earman, “Who's Afraid of Absolute Space?,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy 48, no. 3 (1970): 317.

21 Euan Squires, The Mystery of the Quantum World (Bristol: Adam Hilger, 1986), 4.

22 George Gale, “Cosmos and Conflict,” paper presented at the conference “The Origin of the Universe,” Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO, September 22–25, 1988.

23 Tony Rothman and George Ellis, “Has Cosmology become Metaphysical?” Astronomy, 15 no., 2 (1987), 7.

24 Gale, “Cosmos and Conflict.”

25 Alexander Vilenkin, “Birth of Inflationary Universes,” Physical Review D 27 (1983): 2854.

26 Bas C. van Fraassen, “Empiricism in the Philosophy of Science,” in Images of Science: Essays on Realism and Empiricism, ed. by

Paul M. Churchland and Clifford A. Hooker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 258.

27 William Hasker, The Emergent Self (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 23.

28 Tyler Burge, “Philosophy of Language and Mind: 1950–1990,” Philosophical Review 101, no. 1 (1992): 49. Arguably the utter collapse of nineteenth century Idealism in both Continental and Anglo-American philosophy created a caesura between Idealist and post-Idealist philosophy which was deeper than the caesura between positivist and post-positivist philosophy, especially in Anglo-American philosophy, which continues to be broadly analytic on both sides of the positivist divide. But the collapse of positivism was more important for the rebirth of Christian philosophy.

29 For a nice account from an eyewitness see William Hasker, “Analytic Philosophy of Religion,” in The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion, ed. William J. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 421–446; cf. Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 1–13. Hasker discerns three phases of the movement: 1955–1965, when the predominant concern was religious language; 1965–1985, when the debate over the coherence and truth of theism dominated the field; and 1985–present, during which philosophical theology blossomed. For a deeper, if cursory, look back see William J. Wainwright, “Introduction,” in Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion, 3–6.

30 Wolterstorff thinks that a second precondition of the rise of analytic philosophy of religion was the collapse of classical foundationalism through meta-epistemological investigations during the 1960s (Nicholas Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible within the Analytic Tradition of Philosophy,” in Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 158–161). But I suspect that Wolterstorff is putting the cart before the horse. It took decades before the reverberations of those investigations were fully felt in religious epistemology, and by then

the renaissance of Christian philosophy was already well on its way. I see the revolution wrought by Reformed epistemology (to be discussed in the sequel) to be the fruit rather than a seed of contemporary philosophy of religion. What we do find fairly early on are challenges to so-called “evidentialism,” the Enlightenment conviction that “theistic belief, to be rationally held, must be grounded in evidence, and that such evidence must ultimately consist of that of which one is certain” (158). For example, in a fascinating little comment by a young Alvin Plantinga in 1962, he points out that “there are many beliefs we all hold and hold with no detriment to our rationality for which we cannot produce both evidence and proof that the evidence really is evidence” – for example, belief in other minds (Alvin Plantinga, “The Sceptics' Strategy,” in Faith and the Philosophers, ed. John Hick [London: Macmillan, 1964], 227; cf. Kai Nielsen's dogged reply: “if I am talking about some question of fact, if I assert that something is true, I imply that I have evidence for what I claim to be true” (Kai Nielsen, “A Sceptic's Reply,” in Faith and the Philosophers, 231). Plantinga's insight would later bear fruit in his God and Other Minds [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967]. But challenging evidentialism is a far cry from a searching analysis of classical foundationalism, which was yet to come. Moreover, the defense of theistic belief did not require an abandonment tout court of classical foundationalism, for theists could counter the sceptic by defending theistic arguments which were as acceptable as arguments for secular conclusions. Wolterstorff fails to give due account of the resurgence of natural theology as a vital part of contemporary philosophy of religion. Early books in philosophy of religion thus typically included a substantial section on theistic arguments (see, e.g., Daniel J. Bronstein and Harold M. Schulweis, Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion: A Book of Readings [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1954]; Frederick Ferré, Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967]; George L. Abernethy and Thomas A. Langford, Philosophy of Religion: A Book of Readings, 2nd ed. [London: Macmillan, 1968]. Thus, the demise of classical

foundationalism could not have been a precondition of the renaissance of Christian philosophy.

Baruch Brody attributes the dearth of philosophy of religion during the first half of the twentieth century, not only to Verificationism, but also to the fact that “very few working philosophers in the analytic school have had a personal religious commitment”; but by the time of his writing he reports “a growing number of analytical philosophers who have a real personal interest in theological issues and would like to apply to those issues the methods of the analytic school” (Baruch A. Brody, ed., Readings in the Philosophy of Religion [Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974], vii; cf. Philip L. Quinn, “Philosophy of Religion, History of [Addendum],” in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2nd ed., ed. Donald M. Borchert [Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006]), 7:497–98. Wolterstorff considers this factor so important that, along with the demise of Verificationism and classical foundationalism, he lists it as one of the three preconditions for the renaissance of Christian philosophy:

“We are touching here on a fundamental cultural difference between the United States… and Europe… . The flowering of philosophical theology… has occurred mainly in the United States, this in spite of the fact that analytic philosophy is at least as dominant in such places as England, Scandinavia, and Australia as it is in North America. The reason for the difference is obvious: the United States is far more religious than these other parts of the world… . In short, the sociological fact that a good many American philosophers are theists, Christian and Jewish especially, has been a decisive factor in the flourishing of philosophical theology” (Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 162).

While Wolterstorff is doubtless correct about the critical role played by the United States' greater religiosity, appealing to such sociological factors casts one's explanatory net so wide that one would justifiably include, e.g., the remarkable ministry of Billy

Graham and its impact on American culture as a contributing factor to the renaissance of philosophy of religion! We are interested in philosophical, not sociological, reasons for the change. It is interesting that authors citing Wolterstorff's analysis routinely ignore his third precondition (e.g., Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea, “Introduction,” in Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology, ed. Flint and Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 3).

31 Already in 1962 Abernethy and Langford were able to report, “serious study and discussion of philosophical issues in religion are on the rise. Among scholars in the fields of philosophy and theology there is more interest in the work being done in each other's discipline and more of an effort to take seriously each other's interests than at any time for several decades” (Abernethy and Langford, Philosophy of Religion [Preface to the First Edition, 1962], ix). By 1967, H. D. Lewis could say that the philosophy of religion “has become again one of the liveliest interests of philosophers” (H. D. Lewis, “Philosophy of Religion, History of,” in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan & The Free Press, 1967), 6:285.

32 “Modernizing the Case for God,” Time, April 7, 1980, 65–66. Note the oblique reference to Verificationism.

33 For lists of contemporary professional journals and societies devoted to the philosophy of religion, see Taliaferro, Evidence and Faith, 431–432.

34 See, e.g., Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, eds., The Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion, 4 vols. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021); Chad Meister and Paul Copan, eds., The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion (London: Routledge, 2007); Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, eds., A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). For online resources see Klaas J. Kraay, “Contemporary Analytic Thought: 1950–Present,” in

Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119009924.eopr0082.

35 Quentin Smith, “The Metaphilosophy of Naturalism,” Philo 4, no. 2 (2001): 196–197.

36 Smith, “Metaphilosophy of Naturalism,” 198.

37 Still, caution should be exercised in citing PhilPapers surveys to the effect that only 16% of philosophy faculty or PhDs accept or lean towards theism (Kevin Timpe, “On Analytic Theology,” Scientia et Fides 3, no. 2 [2015]: 14). The claim that Anglo-American philosophy has experienced a renaissance of Christian philosophy should not be misunderstood as the claim that Christian philosophers have come to occupy a significant percentage of faculty positions at tier 1 universities, as Graham Oppy would require (Graham Oppy, “Philosophy, Religion, and Worldview,” in Christian Philosophy: Conceptions, Continuations, and Challenges, ed. J. Aaron Simmons [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019], 246–251). After all, as Oppy recognizes, in 2015 there were around 400 religiously affiliated American universities and colleges, as well as some 200 seminaries in which philosophers are employed to teach philosophy. Puzzled that neither I nor any of my dozen philosophical colleagues at Talbot School of Theology received the PhilPapers survey, I discovered that these surveys were mailed to less than 2,000 persons in 99 “leading departments of philosophy” (only 62 of which were in the U.S.)! Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries were virtually overlooked. Less than half of the philosophers targeted responded (47.2%) to the survey, for a total of 931 philosophers in Europe, Australasia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Only 47 of the philosophers targeted had philosophy of religion as their area of specialization. See http://philpapers.org/surveys/depts.html, archived at https://perma.cc/NNY2-RKST. Citing a more recent survey showing that the percentage of theists among philosophers of religion is triple the percentage of theists among philosophers more generally, Kraay suggests, incredibly, that theists are significantly overrepresented in

analytic philosophy of religion, rather than that theists are significantly underrepresented in analytic philosophy as a whole (Kraay, “Contemporary Analytic Thought,” 469)! Hasker rightly reflects, “the status and influence within the profession of Christian philosophy are significantly higher than was the case in, say, 1955. If this is so, it seems appropriate to describe the process by which this came about as a surge. It certainly has seemed like that to many of us who have observed the process unfolding. Indeed, it seems implausible to attribute the widespread impression that a surge has occurred to a collective delusion among a considerable number of philosophers, some of whom are far from welcoming the phenomenon” (William Hasker, “Responding to Challenges,” in Christian Philosophy, ed. J. A. Simmons, 288–289.)

38 Contrast, e.g., the very negative attacks on “supernaturalist religious beliefs” anthologized by Steven M. Cahn, ed., Philosophy of Religion, Sources in Contemporary Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), esp. 1–3.

39 In updating the old Encyclopedia of Philosophy entries on philosophy of religion, Robert Adams could report, “The grounds proposed for belief or disbelief in the existence of God have naturally claimed at least as much analytical attention as the attributes of God… . the state of debate has changed significantly since 1960. One striking change is that the traditional arguments for the existence of God, then widely dismissed, even by theologians, as hopelessly discredited, have many defenders at the turn of the twenty-first century” (Robert M. Adams, “Philosophy of Religion,” in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2nd ed., ed. Donald M. Borchert [Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006], 480). See the partial list of contemporary proponents of various theistic arguments in Taliaferro, Evidence and Faith, 437.

40 William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland, eds., The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). See now as well Colin Ruloff and Peter Horban, eds., Contemporary

Arguments in Natural Theology: God and Rational Belief (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

41 Alvin Plantinga, “Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments” (lecture presented at the 33rd Annual Philosophy Conference, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, October 23–25, 1986).

42 Trent Dougherty and Jerry Walls, eds., Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

43 So Taliaferro reports that “there is a very large literature now on the articulation and critique of arguments for the existence of God” (Taliaferro, Evidence and Faith, 407). I am therefore astonished that Wolterstorff should assert that “analytic philosophical theologians have shown relatively little interest in providing rational grounding for their fundamental theistic convictions … . attempts at rationally grounding theistic belief have been a relatively minor part of recent philosophical theology” (Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 163, 166). Such a claim cannot be defended by explaining that “the dominant attitude has quite clearly been that nothing of any great epistemological importance hangs on whether or not one can give arguments for God's existence” (163), for that attitude represents a rejection of evidentialism, not natural theology. As a case in point, Wolterstorff's fellow Reformed epistemologist Alvin Plantinga judges that the theistic arguments, while unnecessary for rational belief in God, succeed in making it more probable than not that God exists (Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 131). Neither did the medieval philosophical theologians, with whom Wolterstorff contrasts contemporary philosophical theologians, think that warranted Christian belief requires theistic proofs, for they held that the conclusions of theistic arguments that are accessible mainly to scholars are examples of truths which faith proposes but reason is able to recover.

44 Christian Doctrine is defined by Jaroslav Pelikan as “what the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the

basis of the Word of God” (Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600) [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971], 1). This definition properly permits doctrine, given the diversity of the church, to be false and also allows for non-Christian doctrine, e.g., Muslim doctrine.

45 The editors explain:

“We should like to have used the expression ‘Philosophy of Religion' for its analogy with ‘Philosophy of History', ‘Philosophy of Science', and so on: since the questions discussed here are philosophical and bear the same sort of relation to religious thought and practice as the questions of the philosophy of history and of science bear to the thought and practice of working scientists and historians; the relation, that is, of arising out of or being posed by these empirical disciplines, while being themselves philosophical and not factual questions… . But this expression has become, and seems likely for some time to remain, associated with Idealist attempts to present philosophical prolegomena to theistic theology. So we have adopted as an alternative the expression ‘Philosophical Theology'; which has a welcome analogy to ‘Philosophical Ethics' and ‘Philosophical Aesthetics'… .” (Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, “Preface,” in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, eds. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre [New York: Macmillan, 1955], viii.)

That Flew and MacIntyre could fear that philosophy of religion might be associated with Idealism shows how incredibly primitive, i.e., early, these essays were. That concern proved to be ill-founded.

46 William P. Alston, “Philosophy of Religion, Problems of,” in Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2nd ed., ed. Donald M. Borchert, (1967) (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006), 500.

47 Thomas V. Morris, ed., Philosophy and the Christian Faith, University of Notre Dame Studies in the Philosophy of Religion 5

(Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), ix.

48 Thomas V. Morris, “Introduction,” in Philosophy and the Christian Faith, 1.

49 Plantinga is not alone in opining that “the best work in philosophical theology – in the English-speaking world and over the last quarter-century – has been done not by theologians but by philosophers” (Alvin Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader, ed. James F. Sennett [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998], 341).

50 See Michael C. Rea, Essays in Analytic Theology, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1, who claims with Oliver Crisp credit for the term. A word of caution is in order: systematic theologians may speak of “dogmatics in the analytical tradition,” referring not to modern analytic philosophy, but to a “method in which doctrinal exposition is oriented toward practical issues concerning human salvation and destiny rather than speculative questions concerning God and God's decrees” (John Webster, “Introduction: Systematic Theology,” in The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5), a method almost the opposite of analytic philosophical theology!

51 In the words of three of its most enthusiastic proponents, Oliver D. Crisp, James M. Arcadi, and Jordan Wessling, The Nature and Promise of Analytic Theology (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 67. Analytic theology thus fulfills David Brown's early call for “nothing less than the founding of a new discipline of philosophical theology (or the widening of the horizons of the philosophy of religion) to apply more widely the type of penetration of theology by philosophy” illustrated by his own treatment of the Trinity (David Brown, The Divine Trinity [London: Duckworth, 1985], x; cf. 305, 308). For bibliographies see both Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise and the T&T Clark Handbook to Analytic Theology, ed. James M. Arcadi and James T. Turner, Jr. (London: T & T Clark, 2021). The fact that a comprehensive bibliography should even be attempted is testimony to how young this movement is.

52 Stephen Davis suggests that one reason for the move of philosophers into theology is the dissatisfaction with the current state of the discipline. Christian philosophers find the work of such thinkers as Anselm, Aquinas, or Calvin “typically to be more careful, stimulating, rigorous, and faithful to the Christian tradition than the work of many contemporary theologians” (Stephen T. Davis, Christian Philosophical Theology [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 4). William Abraham has denounced the “confusion,” “conceptual problems,” and “intellectual sloppiness that bedevil contemporary systematic theology” (William J. Abraham, “Systematic Theology as Analytic Theology,” in Analytic Theology: New Essays, 55). He also complains that “so little doctrinal content was left by the time the theologians were finished speaking” that “much modern and contemporary theology is really the invention of various forms of post-Christian religion” (57). Once “the deep truths of the Gospel and the central elements of the Nicene creed … constitutive of the Christian faith” have been abandoned, then interest in philosophical reflection on such doctrines is bound to atrophy (57). By contrast, “The confusion that abounds in contemporary systematic theology is likely to diminish if theologians … come to terms with the virtues of the analytic tradition” (55). Cf. his even more blistering comments in

William J. Abraham, “Turning Philosophical Water into Theological Wine,” Journal of Analytic Theology 1, no. 1 (2013): 3. Hasker speaks for many when he opines, “analytic philosophy of religion … offers the best means yet available for clarifying the meaning of religious claims and for assessing the reasons for and truth of those claims. Those who are uninterested in clarity and truth as applied to religious assertions will naturally find this style of philosophizing uncongenial. Those who do care about such matters may well find it indispensable” (Hasker, “Analytic Philosophy of Religion,” 443; and more recently, Hasker, “Responding to Challenges,” 303–304).

53 Richard Swinburne, The Coherence of Theism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 7.

54 Much of contemporary theology, he says, is b.s., where “b.s.” abbreviates a technical term denoting discourse involving fakery or nonsense. Analytic philosophical method is the best antidote to theological b.s. Rauser declares:

Academic theology requires its own checks and balances and these are found in the rigorous demands of closely reasoned analysis. As Mark Evans puts it, ‘an anti-bullshit discursive culture may develop if there is greater practice of, and respect for, the techniques of a good old-fashioned analytic-philosophical style, which prizes clarity of exposition and rigor of analysis in pursuit of truth and the “best argument” objectively understood'.*

* [Mark] Evans, “[The] Rhetoric of Bullshit,” [in Bullshit and Philosophy, ed. Gary L. Hardcastle and George A. Reisch (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 2006)] 200” (Randal Rauser, “Theology as a Bull Session,” in Analytic Theology: New Essays, 83).

Unfortunately, he thinks, due to the lack of such checks and balances within Continental thought, there has been no counterpart in theology to the flourishing of philosophical theology in the analytic tradition. “It is no surprise,” muses William Abraham, “that theology

has become thoroughly marginalized if not outright dismissed as a serious intellectual enterprise within the contemporary university" (Abraham, "Systematic Theology as Analytic Theology," 58). Such remarks seem to illustrate Zimmerman's observation that when Christian philosophers in the analytic tradition and Christian theologians do interact, the results can be "somewhat acrimonious," featuring "unpleasant public exchanges between philosophers and theologians, and few signs that either group thought they had much to learn from the other" (Zimmerman, "Three Introductory Questions," 3–4).

55 Michael C. Rea, "Introduction," in Analytic Theology: New Essays, 2. European theologian Daniel von Wachter observes that there is a great divide today between what he calls Schleiermacherian theologians and analytic philosophers of religion. The Schleiermacherians consider the analytic philosophers to be naïve, while the analytic philosophers consider the Schleiermacherians' hostility to the supernatural to be irrational and think that the Schleiermacherians are lacking in good arguments (Daniel von Wachter, "Protestant Theology," in The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Copan, Routledge Philosophy Companions [London: Routledge, 2007], 496–497).

56 See William Wood, Analytic Theology and the Academic Study of Religion, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

57 Rea and Wolterstorff point to different factors contributing to the antipathy of Continental thought to analytic philosophy of religion, but they are united in seeing the Kantian rejection of so-called onto-theology as a crucial factor. It is important to understand that "onto-theology" does not mean ontological realism with respect to theology. Rather, as Wolterstorff explains, in Kant's own usage in The Critique of Pure Reason A632 = B660, onto-theology is a theology that is based solely upon ontological arguments for God's existence by means of pure reason using transcendental concepts

alone. It excludes not only divine revelation but even a posteriori arguments of natural theology (Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 167). So defined, it is obvious to anyone with even a modicum of familiarity with the contemporary literature that analytic philosophy of religion is not onto-theology. But contemporary theologians are not using “onto-theology” in the original Kantian sense. Rather, as Rea explains, “onto-theology” is used to characterize a theology that (i) treats God primarily as an explanatory posit, thereby enabling human reason to give ultimate explanations, and (ii) presupposes that reason is a reliable tool for arriving at clear knowledge of God, so that reasoning about God can ultimately remove divine mystery (Rea, “Introduction,” 9). Once again, however, while some analytic philosophers of religion are proponents of natural theology and so embrace God as the ultimate explanation for facts like the existence of the world and the objectivity of moral values, God is for them much more than an explanatory posit, and the field of analytic philosophy of religion is vastly wider than natural theology; and while many analytic philosophers of religion do believe that reason can yield some clear knowledge of God, I do not know of any who would say that it is possible or even desirable to expel divine mystery. Onto-theology is, frankly, a bogeyman of which we need not be afraid.

58 For example, Gerd Lüdemann, The Resurrection of Jesus, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 12; Bart Ehrman, “Historical Jesus” (The Teaching Company, 2000), pt. 2, p. 50.

59 Morris, “Introduction,” 3–4.

60 Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 157. Rea thinks that the problem goes deeper than just the limits of knowledge. The problem is not just that we are unable to attain clear knowledge of God but that the effort to do so “implicitly denies the transcendence that theology ought to respect and aims at a goal that, if accomplished, would undermine the life of faith and would thus work at cross purposes with the true goal of theology” (Rea, “Introduction,” 11). I find this concern enormously presumptuous. By

what right do continental theologians tell me what would undermine my life of faith, when I find a clear conception of God to deepen my worship and awe of his person and so enrich my faith? How could my conceiving of God as that than which a greater cannot be conceived, a being beyond full human comprehension, possibly impugn his transcendence? Why should I pay attention to what continental theologians tell me is the true aim of theology?

61 Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 160. Rea also points to a perceived link between the rejection of foundationalism and post-modern theology (Rea, “Introduction,” 12). Rea explains that the rejection of classical foundationalism need not be followed by postmodern skepticism but may be succeeded by our admission of additional basic sources of knowledge, such as religious experience, along with the sources recognized by the classical foundationalist. See also Flint and Rea, “Introduction,” 2, who similarly think that two strains of thought have tended to choke out philosophical theology among continental philosophers and systematic theologians: (i) “Some were so gripped by the transcendence of God that they came to think that God was beyond all human categories, even Being itself,” and (ii) “Some were gripped more by human limitations, and came to despair of the possibility of arriving via philosophical methods at general, universally valid theoretical understanding of anything at all.”

62 Rea, “Introduction,” 18.

63 Yablo's works include: “Does Ontology Rest on a Mistake?” Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes 72 (1998): 229–261; “A Paradox of Existence,” in Empty Names, Fiction, and the Puzzles of Non-Existence, ed. Anthony Everett and Thomas Hofweber (Stanford, CA: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 2000), 275–312; “Go Figure: A Path through Fictionalism,” Midwest Studies in Philosophy 25 (2001): 72–102; “Abstract Objects: A Case Study,” Philosophical Issues 12 (2002): 220–240;; “The Myth of the Seven,” in Fictionalism in Metaphysics, ed. Mark Eli Kalderon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 88–115.

64 Richard Swinburne, Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), v, 44–48. Cf. Arthur Holmes' rejection very early on of the claim that we must “reduce all Biblical analogy and metaphor and symbol and poetry and connotation to logically univocal as well as universal form,” for such translations cannot be carried out without “risking cognitive loss” (Arthur F. Holmes, “Ordinary Language Analysis and Theological Method,” Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society 11, no. 2 [1968]: 133).

65 Rea, “Introduction,” 22.

66 Rea, “Introduction,” 22–23.

67 Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 155.

68 Rea, Essays in Analytic Theology, 1:2.

69 See Eleonore Stump, “Athens and Jerusalem: The Relationship of Philosophy and Theology,” Journal of Analytic Theology 1, no. 1(2013): 46–47, who uses “doctrinal” rather than “definitional” to draw the distinction. Stump's own attempt to designate the essence of philosophy and theology respectively turns out to be not only idiosyncratic, but erroneous, based as it is on the hermeneutical fallacy of taking the meaning of words to be given by their etymology. Tellingly, when Stump rejects the post-modernist construal of philosophy, her appeal is sociological: “many contemporary philosophers have not been inclined to adopt the postmodern attitude” (49).

70 Thomas Aquinas Summa theologiae Ia.1.7. Interestingly, Flint and Rea characterize philosophical theology in terms almost identical to Aquinas': Philosophical theology is aimed primarily at “theoretical understanding of the nature and attributes of God, and God's relationship to the world and things in the world” (Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea, “Introduction,” The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 1). Cf. John Webster's description: “Systematic theology attempts a

conceptual articulation of Christian claims about God and everything else in relation to God, characterized by comprehensiveness and coherence” (Webster, “Introduction,” 2). Obviously, systematic theology does not deal with literally “everything else.” The point is rather that the things it treats are viewed from a theological angle.

For Aquinas the focus on God as the subject of theology is ultimately connected to his view that God knows creatures only insofar as he knows himself as their cause. Thus the knowledge of God imparts knowledge of creatures. We can relinquish that doctrine while recognizing that theology is interested in creatures from a specifically theological viewpoint. See also Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:4–6. Pannenberg too quickly assumes that God's relatedness to creation is secured by the incarnation, for this assumption depends upon Thomas' implausible doctrine of divine simplicity, according to which “in its created nature everything that is distinct from God is related to God as the source and goal of its being. But God is not similarly related to created things” (1:6).

71 On the distinction between biblical and systematic theology see the interesting discussion by C. Kavin Rowe and Richard B. Hays, “Biblical Studies,” in Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 435–455. The distinction between biblical theology and dogmatics goes back to Johann Philipp Gabler in 1787. Gabler separated cleanly the discipline of historical exegesis from dogmatic and systematic theology; assigned a proper order to the two disciplines: first historical exegesis, then systematic reflection on the basis of the results; and designated the contents of the Bible as “religion” in contrast to academic “theology.” Although it is easy to criticize the ways in which Gabler drew these distinctions, it is hard to deny that he was basically correct.

Rowe and Hays opine that so long as theology was conceived in terms of systematically ordered propositions, the biblical narratives appeared as limited and limiting texts, inconvenient in their crude particularity. Theology had to be somehow distilled from the raw material of these texts, and the relation between descriptive biblical

study and systematic theological discourse was a fairly distant one. But if the task of theology is understood in the post-liberal mode as the reflective re-narration of the community's identity-defining story at a particular historical moment, then the biblical writers were practicing theology in a way that is exemplary for theologians at any time.

Rowe and Hays' conclusion is not only inaccurate but beside the point. Of course, if we redefine “systematic theology” so that it no longer consists of systematically ordered propositions, then Gabler's distinctions may no longer apply. In any case it is inaccurate to characterize systematic theology as being opposed to the historical particularity of the biblical documents, for true historical statements (e.g., “Pontius Pilate was the Procurator of Judea from AD 26–36”) are universally and (with appropriate tense changes) always true. So events in the life of the historical Jesus, for example, may be determinative for Christology. While the distance between the deliverances of biblical theology (e.g., God's being almighty) and systematic theological formulations (e.g., divine omnipotence) may sometimes be great, that need not be always the case (e.g., substitutionary atonement). We may agree with Rowe and Hays that every exegete has dogmatic interests and presuppositions without thereby collapsing the distinction between biblical and systematic theology.

Their argument that the desire to study the New Testament (NT) free of dogmatic decisions involves us in a basic contradiction, since to speak of various texts as “the New Testament” is in fact to make a dogmatic judgement, need not be taken seriously. The NT, like the Old Testament (OT), presents itself to us as a literary reality, so that no dogmatic decision, say, about canonicity or inspiration, is required to ask what this book (or portions of it) teaches. Failure to pursue biblical theology without such a desire leads to bias and proof-texting and subverts the Bible's corrective role. Anthony Thiselton rightly emphasizes that systematic theology “cannot be true to its biblical foundations unless it takes with utter seriousness both exegesis of specific passages and the historical context and conditioning of most

biblical utterances (Anthony C. Thiselton, Systematic Theology [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015], 13).

72 James K. Meade, Biblical Theology: Issues, Method, and Themes (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 1.

73 Ben Witherington III, Biblical Theology: The Convergence of the Canon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 8.

74 Brevard S. Childs, Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 3. Seen in this light, Wayne Grudem's popular Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) is not really a systematic theology at all, but rather a constructive biblical theology. For Grudem defines systematic theology as “any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?' about any given topic,” and so he deliberately refrains from emphasizing “historical theology or philosophical theology or apologetics” (21). Grudem's denial that his volume is biblical theology rests upon construing “biblical theology” to refer to “tracing the historical development of doctrines throughout the Bible” (22). There is no reason to think that a biblical theologian cannot collect and summarize, as Grudem's systematic theologian is said to do, “the teaching of all the biblical passages on a particular subject” (23). I once criticized Grudem's treatment of divine eternity for its lack of philosophical depth; but given Grudem's self-conscious restriction of his book to summarizing biblical teaching, I now see that such a critique was unfair. His book is simply mistitled.

75 For example, in distinguishing between the literary Adam and the historical Adam, death as a consequence of sin vs. death as a penalty for sin, divine eternity as timelessness or omnitemporality, different conceptions of the imago Dei, understanding the background of the Johannine prologue in Middle Platonism, understanding Egyptian monism as a background of Egyptian mythology, and so on. One may enthusiastically concur with Trent Dougherty's call for “analytic biblical theology,” that is, “analytic

thinkers becoming active participants in the field of biblical studies in ways that engage the mainstream from the inside rather than from the outside" (Trent Dougherty, "Advice for Analytic Theologians: Faith-Guided Scholarship," in Christian Philosophy, 182).

76 See A. P. Martinich, "Introduction" in A Companion to Analytic Philosophy, ed. A. P. Martinich and David Sosa, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 4: analytic philosophy "is not a set of doctrines and not restricted in its subject matter. It is more like a method, a way of dealing with a problem, but in fact not one method but many that bear a family resemblance to each other."

Crisp suggests that analytic theology does inherit from analytic philosophy such substantive commitments as the presumption that there is some theological truth of the matter and that this truth can be ascertained and understood, and an instrumental use of reason (Crisp, "On Analytic Theology," in Analytic Theology: New Essays,35). But I should think that such commitments are theological commitments derived from Scripture; an analytic philosopher, e.g., D. Z. Phillips, might deny them (D. Z. Phillips, Faith and Philosophical Inquiry [New York: Shocken, 1970]). Crisp et al. later state that almost all practitioners of analytic theology share substantive theological commitments, specifically, theological realism, the truth-aptness and truth-directedness of theological claims, and the importance of arguments reflecting the intellectual virtues prized by analytic theologians; but now they claim that analytic theologians share these substantive commitments, not because these commitments are part of the conceptual core of analytic theology, but rather because they are "part of the research culture of analytic theology" (Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise, 18). Once again, the first two substantive commitments are more plausibly derived from Scripture, while the third is attributable to the adoption of the methods of analytic philosophy.

77 See the nice characterization of analytic philosophizing by Max Baker-Hytch, "Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion:

What's the Difference?” Journal of Analytic Theology 4 (2016): 348–349. I find Baker-Hytch's description much more perspicuous than Rea's, which seems to have been shaped by the need to provide foils for understanding contemporary theology's rejection of the analytic approach, as he acknowledges in Michael Rea, “Divine Attributes as a Topic in Analytic Theology,” in Essays in Analytic Theology, 1:185.

78 Rea, “Introduction,” 6.

79 As a corrective to Abraham's definition of analytic theology as “systematic theology attuned to the deployment of the skills, resources, and virtues of analytic philosophy” (Abraham, “Systematic Theology as Analytic Theology,” 59), Crisp rightly points out that analytic theology may not always be systematic theology. For example, someone could do analytic natural theology, prescinding from the resources of divine revelation (Crisp, Analyzing Doctrine, 17). One might have said the same of Christian evidences, which makes it clear that while analytic theology might include positive apologetics, systematic theology does not. Not all philosophical theology is systematic theology, but all systematic theology is philosophical theology of one kind or another. Crisp concludes, “Analytic theology as systematic theology is a way of doing systematic theology that utilizes the tools and methods of contemporary analytic philosophy for the purposes of constructive Christian theology, paying attention to the Christian tradition and development of doctrine” (32; cf. Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise, 53). This characterization is redundant: once one has said that one is talking about a way of doing systematic theology, then the purposes and objects of attention do not need to be specified, for these are implicit in systematic theology. All systematic theology is constructive and attentive to tradition and doctrine. One need only specify that the philosophical component is analytic. Note that this characterization is incompatible with Crisp et al.'s characterization of analytic theology as an intellectual sub-culture (see following note).

80 Crisp, Analyzing Doctrine, 3. As a Wissenschaft analytic theology is also clearly not, pace Crisp et al., an intellectual sub-culture with its own literature, jargon, social networks, and affiliated substantive commitments (Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise, 3, 10–13). Doubtless, there is such a subculture, which has been "generated" by the research activities of analytic theologians, which "gives shape" to analytic theology, and which the analytic theologian is "formed by" and typically "participates" in (10, 11, 15). But analytic theology itself is a Wissenschaft, not a subculture. That Crisp et al. are mistaken in thinking that such a subculture is constitutive of, rather than ancillary to, analytic theology is evident from the fact that earlier analytic philosophers like A. N. Prior, Nelson Pike, and Peter Geach were certainly doing analytic theology even though such a subculture did not yet exist. Even Crisp et al. admit that were a Barthian, Tillichian, or process theologian to explicate his views using the tools of analytic philosophy, then such a person would be doing analytic theology – even though he would not be part of the contemporary subculture of analytic theology (15).

81 Cf. the classic Protestant distinction between the finis theologiae principalis: glorificatio Dei and the finis theologiae intermedius: informatio hominem ad salute. The proximate purpose is to provide information, i.e., propositional truth.

82 As claimed by Stump, who asserts:

"If we think of theology and philosophy in terms of the kind of epistemology each needs to best pursue its aims, then the distinction between knowledge that and knowledge of persons will highlight for us one of the important differences between the two disciplines, doctrinally considered. It is one thing to focus on gaining insight into a concrete particular who is a person and another thing to concentrate on seeking a body of knowledge characterized in terms of an abstract universal like wisdom" (Stump, "Athens and Jerusalem," 53).

We see here how trying to distinguish between philosophy and theology by specifying essential properties of each discipline leads to idiosyncratic and controversial results.

83 As emphasized by Andrew Torrance, “The Possibility of a Scientific Approach to Analytic Theology,” Journal of Analytic Theology 7 (2019): 178–198, who characterizes “scientific analytic theology” as an approach to analytic theology which seeks to give an account of God and all things in relation to him in a way that corresponds to or tracks the reality of the same (179). Unfortunately, Torrance expands the meaning of “scientific analytic theology” so that “being true to one's faith commitments” is essential to a scientific approach to analytic theology (180). So when it comes to distinguishing between Christian philosophy of religion and Christian analytic theology, all of the five features listed by Torrance involve subjective attitudes and awarenesses on the theologian's part (193–194). This attempt to differentiate the two disciplines fails because (i) the Christian philosopher may equally share such attitudes and awarenesses and (ii) such subjective states of consciousness are not inherent to the scientific nature of theology. It should be obvious that the same set of propositions if written by a non-Christian are no less scientific than if written by a Christian. But Torrance, in effect, endorses theologia regenitorum, maintaining that it is not possible for a Muslim or atheist to write a scientific theology (188). Indeed, on Torrance's view a Muslim who is true to his faith commitments and writes an Islamic theology which seeks to correspond to or track the reality of God and all things in relation to him has failed to write a scientific theology, just because his attempt fails. This is analogous to saying that Hoyle's steady state theory, for example, was not a scientific theory because it failed to correspond to reality.

84 Rea, “Introduction,” 19.

85 One cannot therefore agree with Tillich that the theologian, in contrast to the philosopher, “is determined by his faith. Every theology presupposes that the theologian is in the theological circle. This contradicts the open, infinite, and changeable character of

philosophical truth" (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:23 [my emphasis]). What does it mean to be in the theological circle? Tillich explains,

"The theologian… is not detached from his object but is involved in it. He looks at his object (which transcends the character of being an object) with passion, fear, and love. This is not the erōs of the philosopher or his passion for objective truth; it is the love which accepts saving, and therefore personal, truth. The basic attitude of the theologian is commitment to the content he expounds" (1:22–23).

Now even if it is true that the theologian is typically not detached from his object of study, but passionately committed to it, such subjective dispositions as Tillich describes are not germane to the propositional truth enunciated by the theologian. A theology written by a dispassionate person is not ipso facto not a systematic theology. Interestingly, Tillich seemed to recognize this fact: In contrast to the philosopher, who "wants to serve the universal logos" and "tries to turn away from his existential situation, including his ultimate concern," the theologian:

"instead of turning away from his existential situation, including his ultimate concern, turns toward it. He turns toward it, not in order to make a confession of it, but in order to make clear the universal validity, the logos structure, of what concerns him ultimately. And he can do this only in an attitude of detachment from his existential situation and in obedience to the universal logos. This obliges him to be critical of every special expression of his ultimate concern… . He must take the risk of being driven beyond the boundary line of the theological circle… . The detachment required in honest theological work can destroy the necessary involvement of faith" (1:25–26 [my emphasis]).

Here Tillich seems to insist that the theologian, despite, and even at the risk of, his faith commitment, must assume a stance of dispassionate objectivity in doing theology. He remains in the theological circle, it seems, only in having a personal faith commitment to his ultimate concern (God) and in having among his sources the Logos “who became flesh” and is mediated through the church, its traditions, and its present reality (1:23–24). But in that case, as explained in the text, faith is not a requirement of doing systematic theology.

86 On his life and works see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Cragg, archived at https://perma.cc/CTD6-7JCP.

87 See, e.g., the popular handbook by Horst Georg Pöhlmann, Abriss der Dogmatik, 3rd rev. ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1966), who defines dogmatics as the ecclesiastical science of God that summarizes the biblical message and reformulates it anew for our time (36). Pöhlmann emphasizes the unavoidability of philosophy for dogmatics (28–29).

88 Sometimes such confessional theology is called “symbolics” (Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003], 1:54, 60).

89 For fine examples, see Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, ed., A History of Christian Doctrine (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–1978); Friedrich Loofs, Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte, 6th ed., ed. Kurt Aland (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1959); Adolf von Harnack, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, 3 vols., 4th ed. Sammlung theologischer Bücher 1 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909). Note that Cunliffe-Jones believes that the ideal historian of Christian theology would be equally at home in the fields of history and philosophy (Cunliffe-Jones, “Introduction,” in History of Christian Doctrine, 17; cf. 18). For an instructive illustration of how historical theology can be muddled by ignoring philosophy see Jordan P.

Barrett, Divine Simplicity: A Biblical and Trinitarian Account, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), who declines to “address the long-standing debates in analytic philosophy, philosophy of religion, or philosophical theology because these disciplines have nothing to offer my project. Rather, the debates seek different goals (e.g., analytic precision) and therefore ask different questions and use different tools to engage those questions” (3). Precisely his failure to provide clear definitions of terms like “essence,” “composition,” “attribute,” and “simplicity” subvert his project of tracing the roots of historical theology's commitment to divine simplicity.

90 A salutary emphasis of Tillich: “A theological system is supposed to satisfy two basic needs: the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation” (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:3). Systematic theology must therefore be “apologetic theology” in that it provides answers to the questions raised by each generation's existential situation. Tillich sought to find a respected place for the “discredited” discipline of apologetics by means of his “method of correlation” as a way of doing systematic theology. According to that method, the agenda for systematic theology is set by an analysis of the contemporary human situation, to which answers are in turn provided by the Christian message. “Apologetics, therefore, is an omnipresent element and not a special section of systematic theology. The ‘method of correlation' applied in the present system gives pointed expression to the decisive character of the apologetic element in systematic theology” (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:30). For Tillich systematic theology thus comprised defensive apologetics, even if it did not extend so far as to offering a positive apologetic for the Christian message (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:16, 18).

Tillich's method of correlation commendably underscores the relevance of the Christian message to one's contemporary intellectual milieu; but he went too far in allowing it to set the agenda for systematic theology. He tried to justify that method by his rejection of the “supranaturalistic” method, which “takes the Christian

message to be a sum of revealed truths which have fallen into the human situation like strange bodies from a strange world" (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:64–66). Although Tillich thought that on such a method, "No mediation to the human situation is possible," it is not at all clear why revealed truths could not be shown to correlate with the questions arising from our situation and thus provide answers to our deepest questions. Nor is there any reason to limit systematic theology to existential questions; the goal ought rather to be a synoptic worldview that takes account of what we learn from various disciplines regardless of their immediate relevance to existential concerns. For example, we shall want to know how the doctrine of divine eternity is to be correlated with what we learn of time from relativity theory.

91 N.B. the silence of Crisp et al. concerning apologetics and fundamental theology in their effort to explicate the nature of analytic theology. Their closest approach is their discussion of so-called declarative theology of certain fourteenth century theologians like Peter Aureoli (Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise, 20–33). According to Aureoli declarative theology helps to remove misunderstandings about the articles of faith in four ways: (1) by clarifying the terms utilized in the articles of faith, (2) by defeating objections to the articles of faith, (3) by providing analogies or examples illustrating the articles of faith, and (4) by giving probability arguments in support of the articles of faith. Crisp et al. characterize analytic theology as declarative theology. The first three tasks belong to systematic theology, as I understand it, but I should say that the fourth belongs to apologetics. So the implication of Crisp et al.'s view is that the analytic theologian is to be engaged in apologetics as well as systematics. Unfortunately, Crisp et al's discussion lacks this sort of differentiation. Indeed, it is not even clear that they think that the fourth task involves providing non-question-begging arguments for the articles of the faith, since the example they give involves a premise which would be accepted only by someone who already accepts the conclusion. So it is far from clear that they think that apologetics is a task of analytic theologians.

92 Gerald O'Collins, Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15–16.

93 I am indebted to Catholic professors Winfried Löffler and Armin Krainer for discussion.

94 O'Collins, Rethinking Fundamental Theology, 4–5.

95 The title of chap. 1 of Pannenberg's Systematic Theology, 1:1.

96 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1.26. Pannenberg believes that the doctrine of verbal inspiration and biblical authority “could not be maintained in the face of new scientific, historical, and geographical evidence, and the idea of accommodation, which had been introduced to defend the thesis that every word of scripture is of divine origin, made it increasingly hollow” (1:46). Pannenberg seems to think that verbal inspiration implies a dictation theory of inspiration, according to which not “anything in scripture is of human origin,” as opposed to a model of inspiration as appropriated discourse (1:32). We return to this subject in De Scriptura sacra.

97 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:8.

98 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:50.

99 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:60.

100 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:48.

101 For example, Thomas V. Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); Andrew Ter Ern Loke, A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2014). As Crisp et al. explain, “models are nearly always used in the analytic theological literature for some narrow purpose, such as understanding how it is not a contradiction to suppose that the simple God can be both three and one or that Christ can be both finite and infinite” (Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise, 18). “Such modeling in analytic theology enables the theologian to provide new ways of thinking about theological sources and

doctrines that are not necessarily true all things considered, but are illuminating and helpful ways of conceiving particular doctrines – as well as (hopefully) being possibly true, at least in significant respects" (57–58).

102 It may be doubted how seriously Pannenberg actually takes this charge, for he holds that Christianity's claim to reveal the one true God "is open to future verification in history, which is as yet incomplete, and which is still exposed, therefore, to the question of its truth… . Since we have to make an attempt at this so long as there is Christian teaching, the theological testing and verification of the truth claims of Christian revelation will take place in the form of a systematic reconstruction of Christian doctrine, beginning with the understanding of God" (Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:257). Such a reconstruction is a far cry from probabilistic confirmation of the Christian faith.

103 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:46.

104 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:46.

105 For an example of presuppositionalism in systematic theology see Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, vol. 1, God Who Speaks and Shows: Preliminary Considerations (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), chap.13 "The Method and Criteria of Theology (1): Revelation: The Basic Epistemological Axiom." Presuppositionalists like Henry tend to collapse any distinction between systematic theology and apologetics, since Scripture attests authoritatively to its own truth.

106 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:234.

107 Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1940) 1:153–154.

108 Baker-Hytch, "Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion," 351.

109 For Protestant scholasticism Scripture is the norma normans determining the doctrinal content of the Christian faith, while church

confessions are the norma normata determined by Scripture.

110 See William J. Wainwright, who probably more than any other has had a foot in both camps (William J. Wainright, ed., God, Philosophy and Academic Culture: A Discussion between Scholars in the AAR and the APA [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996]). Here, indeed, we have the sort of intellectual sub-cultures spoken of by Crisp et al.

111 As one might anticipate, the phenomenon of religion is so amorphous as to make difficult any definition of “religion” which is immune to counter-examples. Although whole books are available on this question, David Shatz conveniently provides a handful of plausible definitions of “religion” in his Philosophy and Faith: A Philosophy of Religion Reader (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), xv–xvi. Michael Peterson et al. provide the following explication of “religion,” which they claim fits every cultural phenomenon that we call a religion: “Religion is constituted by a set of beliefs, actions, and emotions, both personal and corporate, organized around the concept of an Ultimate Reality” (Michael Peterson et al., Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 4). Even if we cannot specify necessary and sufficient conditions of religion, this is not of great moment, as Winfried Löffler points out, since neither can we identify such conditions for other fields such as psychology, sociology, and other cultural sciences. What we can do is identify a number of family resemblances among undisputed examples of religions that serve to make clear what we are talking about (Winfried Löffler, Einführung in die Religionsphilosophie, Einführungen Philosophie [Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006], 15–16; cf. 43). Charles Taliaferro, Contemporary Philosophy of Religion (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 21, similarly says that religions include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism and those traditions that resemble one or more of them.

112 Some have lamented the lack of religious diversity in philosophy of religion, which is dominated by Christian philosophers (Moti Mizrahi, “If Analytic Philosophy of Religion Is Sick, Can It Be Cured?” Religious Studies 56 [2020]: 558–577). Paradoxically, we can praise God and rejoice that most philosophers of religion are Christian, even if the field could benefit by greater participation by adherents of non-Christian religions. Although exploration of non-Christian philosophy of religion by Christian philosophers can be beneficial for Christian philosophy, the best way to increase the diversity of the field is by welcoming non-Christian philosophers into the field.

113 The eminent Oxonian philosopher Anthony Kenny has said:

“If there is no God, then God is incalculably the greatest single creation of the human imagination. No other creation of the imagination has been so fertile of ideas, so great an inspiration to philosophy, to literature, to painting, sculpture, architecture, and drama. Set beside the idea of God, the most original inventions of mathematicians and the most unforgettable characters in drama are minor products of the imagination: Hamlet and the square root of minus one pale into insignificance by comparison” (Anthony Kenny, Faith and Philosophy [New York: Columbia University Press, 1983], 59).

I am indebted to Charles Taliaferro for this reference. Kenny, who was my external examiner at Birmingham, once remarked to me that he found philosophy of religion to be the most interesting field of philosophy because, as the spokes of a wheel touch every part of the wheel, so philosophy of religion touches every other area of philosophy.

114 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:22.

115 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:23.

116 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:24.

117 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:26.

118 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:27.

119 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:27.

120 Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:28.

121 John MacQuarrie, Principles of Christian Theology, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1977), 39. And even within the theological enterprise, MacQuarrie separates philosophical theology, which excludes non-natural sources of knowledge, from “symbolic” (i.e., confessional) theology and applied theology. Even Geddes MacGregor, who so emphasized the personal importance of religious belief for the religious philosopher, insisted that “the religious philosopher is strikingly distinguished from the theologian” in that “the religious philosopher as such ought not to be a theologian in his working hours… . As a theologian he is committed to the acceptance of certain postulates which may even be set forth in propositional form. As a religious philosopher he must practice a rigorous intellectual self-denial that precludes any procedure of that kind” (Geddes MacGregor, Introduction to Religious Philosophy [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959], 315–316).

122 Ferré, Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion, 10.

123 Ferré, Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion, 10.

124 Alston, “Philosophy of Religion, Problems of.”

125 William L. Rowe, Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction (Encino, CA: Dickenson, 1978), 1–2. Cf. John Hick's less radical characterization: “Philosophy of religion … need not be undertaken from a religious standpoint at all. Philosophy of religion is accordingly not a branch of theology…, but a branch of philosophy” (John H. Hick, Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., Foundations of Philosophy Series [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973], 1–2 [my emphasis]). Hick's characterization leaves open the possibility that philosophy of religion may be undertaken from a religious standpoint. Hick assumes, wrongly I think, that theology must be undertaken

from a religious standpoint. Examples of more recent philosophers of religion holding to an essentially Tillichian view include Long, Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion, 3; and Löffler, Einführung in die Religionsphilosophie, 34–35.

126 Wood, Analytic Theology, 48. Wood thinks that analytic philosophy of religion is limited to the study of “bare theism,” viz., the existence and nature of God, whereas philosophical theology investigates “the theological claims made by a specific religious tradition” (7). Such a characterization is simply out of touch with the reality of these disciplines. Wood seems to realize that this distinction is artificial rather than truly descriptive, for he admits that “the line between philosophy of religion and philosophical theology has always been fuzzy…much analytic philosophy of religion is implicitly the philosophy of Christianity despite explicitly bearing the moniker ‘philosophy of religion'” (7, 9). As for analytic theology, Wood can discern “no sharp distinction between ‘analytic theology' and ‘analytic philosophical theology'” (8). In fairness, it should be said that Wood's burden is not to delineate these disciplines but rather to build bridges between analytic theology on the one hand and theology and religious studies on the other.

127 Stump, “Athens and Jerusalem,” 48. But see Crisp et al.'s discussion of the prominent American theologian Robert Jenson, who regards philosophy as secularized theology, a rival to theology (Crisp, Arcadi, and Wessling, Nature and Promise, 50). Indeed, it seems to me that the notion that analytic philosophy of religion is an inherently secular discipline remains commonplace among theologians, especially those anxious to carve out an exclusive domain for themselves. All too often generic, rather than Christian, philosophy of religion is played off against Christian theology. For example, Baker-Hytch asserts, “To treat Christian scripture and tradition as epistemologically foundational is certainly to part ways with the methodology of analytic philosophy of religion” (Baker-Hytch, “Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion,” 356; cf. Wood, Analytic Theology, 48, who endorses Baker-Hytch's distinction; Andrew Chignell, “‘As Kant Has Shown…': Analytic

Theology and the Critical Philosophy," in Analytic Theology, ed. Crisp and Rea, 119).

128 Wolterstorff, "How Philosophical Theology Became Possible," 160.

129 Wolterstorff, "How Philosophical Theology Became Possible," 160.

130 W. V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in Ontological Relativity and Other Essays, ed. W. V. Quine (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 69–90.

131 W. V. Quine, "Things and Their Place in Theories," in Theories and Things, ed. W. V. Quine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 21.

132 In his "Five Milestones of Empiricism," Quine identified naturalism as the "abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy prior to natural science" (W. V. Quine, "Five Milestones of Empiricism," in Theories and Things, ed. Quine, 67).

133 Quine, "Five Milestones of Empiricism," 72. Otto Neurath was a sometime member of the Vienna Circle who frequently employed the image of reconstructing a boat while at sea in order to express his anti-foundationalist view of knowledge. See Nancy Cartwright et al., Otto Neurath: Philosophy between Science and Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 89–166.

134 W. V. Quine, "Naturalism; or, Living within One's Means," Dialectica 49 (1995): 252.

135 Quine, "Naturalism," 252.

136 Michael C. Rea, World without Design: The Ontological Consequences of Naturalism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 49.

137 Of naturalism, Rea observes, "It is not just fashionable nowadays; it enjoys the lofty status of academic orthodoxy" (Rea, World without Design, 1). John Burgess and Gideon Rosen, reflecting on the present state of Anglophone philosophy, state that

there is “near consensus” on the presupposition of naturalized epistemology (John P. Burgess and Gideon Rosen, A Subject with No Object [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], 64–65). Thomas Hofweber agrees: “Today almost all of ontology, the discipline, is within the paradigm that started with Quine's classic essay ‘On What There Is'… we look to science to tell us what there is” (Thomas Hofweber, “Ontology and Objectivity,” [PhD diss., Stanford University, 1999], 3). Concerning Quine's legacy Roger Gibson surmises, “Only time can tell, but I suggest that his revival of naturalism (the ‘naturalistic turn') will survive well into the new century. Philosophy is continuous with science; there is no first philosophy, no external vantage point” (Roger F. Gibson, Jr., “Willard Van Orman Quine,” in The Cambridge Companion to Quine, ed. Roger F. Gibson, Jr. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 14). A caveat is in order, however: the form of “naturalism” dominant in contemporary philosophy of mathematics is not the hardline Quinean restrictivism, but rather a disposition to place special weight on the views and practices of mathematicians themselves, as the practitioners of the discipline, rather than on the views of outsiders, including philosophers. On naturalism in this sense, see Penelope Maddy, Naturalism in Mathematics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pt. 3: “Naturalism.” Similarly, Alvin Plantinga avers that his account of warrant in terms of the proper functioning of our cognitive faculties is naturalistic, leading him to tease, “striking the naturalistic pose is all the rage these days, and it's a great pleasure to be able to join the fun” (Alvin Plantinga, Warrant and Proper Function [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 46).

138 For this appellation, see Burgess and Rosen, Subject with No Object, 205. Rosen elsewhere distinguishes what he calls permissive naturalism from restrictive naturalism. The permissive naturalist holds that fulfillment of the internal norms of a scientific discipline is sufficient to make belief in certain entities rational; whereas the restrictive naturalist maintains that it is irrational not to believe in the entities so recommended (Gideon Rosen, “Nominalism, Naturalism, Epistemic Relativism,” Philosophical

Perspectives 15 [2001]: 80–82). Rosen raises a number of difficult questions for the restrictive naturalist; but even his so-called permissive naturalism restricts our basic sources of knowledge to the sciences. As Burgess and Rosen state, “The naturalists' commitment is at most to the comparatively modest proposition that when science speaks with a firm and unified voice, the philosopher is either obliged to accept its conclusions or to offer what are recognizably scientific reasons for resisting them” (Burgess and Rosen, Subject with No Object, 65). There can be no extra-scientific basic source of knowledge that might lead us to doubt that scientific practice delivers to us the whole truth about reality. The Christian theist's theological grounds for not taking the fulfillment of the internal norms of a scientific discipline to be the final word in ontology will therefore be treated dismissively.

139 Alvin Plantinga, “Advice to Christian Philosophers,” Faith and Philosophy 1, no. 3 (1984): 253–271. Plantinga delivered two admonitions: “First, Christian philosophers and Christian intellectuals generally must display more autonomy – more independence of the rest of the philosophical world. Second, Christian philosophers must display more integrity – integrity in the sense of integral wholeness, or oneness, or unity, being all of one piece” (254). Cf. Plantinga's own integrative thinking concerning a theistic perspective on the existence of mathematical objects in Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism (Oxford University Press, 2011), 284–291.

140 For a critique see Paul Moser and David Yandell, “Farewell to Philosophical Naturalism,” in Naturalism: A Critical Analysis, ed. Wm. L. Craig and J. P. Moreland (London: Routledge, 2000), 3–23.

141 Rea, World without Design, 63–67; cf. 1–7.

142 Rea, World without Design, 72.

143 Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 161; cf. Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 11, on the

sense in which contemporary analytic philosophy can be said to be "post-modern."

144 Wolterstorff, "How Philosophical Theology Became Possible," 163. Cf. John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," in The Law of Peoples with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 129–180. Unfortunately, in his contribution to an influential theological handbook Gordon Graham has failed to absorb the point. While acknowledging "the re-emergence of a measure of intellectual conversation" between philosophy and theology in the late twentieth century, he continues to speak of the "seemingly permanent divergence of theology and philosophy" (Graham, "Philosophy," 514). On what basis does he make this judgement? He writes:

Plantinga, Swinburne, and others… have brought renewed strength and vigor to the philosophical discussion of religion and theology. It would not be true to say, however, that the separation of theology and philosophy which began with modern philosophy has been reversed to any great extent… . metaphysicians in general have not turned back to theology. The philosophical investigation of theological topics has become a branch of philosophy in its own right, and even includes the investigation of strictly doctrinal subjects such as the incarnation, the Trinity, original sin, and predestination… . But the closeness of this engagement with doctrinal subjects, while being accorded intellectual respect, has further displaced philosophical theology from the heart of philosophy. Whereas formerly it encompassed and influenced the core areas of metaphysics, moral philosophy, and epistemology, contemporary philosophy of religion is to be ranked alongside other respected but more peripheral branches, such as aesthetics and political philosophy. Both these areas look back to a venerable history they can claim as their own, and both can name figures past and present as major contributors to the western philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, neither would take precedence over metaphysics,

moral philosophy, or epistemology in the story of that tradition, and this is reflected in the ‘optional' status of both in the typical curriculum” (Graham, “Philosophy,” 524–525).

Freedom from public philosophical reason does not require that most metaphysicians turn back to theology or that philosophy of religion take precedence over the core areas of metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology! One hardly expects that most philosophers should convert to Christian theism or surrender their naturalized epistemology. But, as Graham acknowledges, Christian philosophers now have a respected place at the table. And in those core areas as well, Christian philosophers of religion have made major contributions to metaphysics (e.g., Peter van Inwagen's Platonism), ethics (e.g., Robert Adams' Divine Command Theory), and epistemology (e.g., Plantinga's account of warrant). The point is that in our situation of epistemological pluralism theology is no longer excluded from philosophy.

145 Wolterstorff, “How Philosophical Theology Became Possible,” 166. Moreover, Christian philosophy itself is a pluralistic enterprise, as emphasized by J. Aaron Simmons, “Introduction: Why This? Why Now?” in Christian Philosophy, ed. Simmons, 1–17. None of the essayists in Christian Philosophy, including non-Christian philosophers, claim with Tillich that there is and can be no such thing as Christian philosophy. At most John Schellenberg claims that “Plantinga-Style Christian Philosophy” is not philosophy, but theology, because it accepts as basic beliefs which are not part of public philosophical reason (J. L. Schellenberg, “Is Plantinga-Style Christian Philosophy Really Philosophy?” in Christian Philosophy, ed. Simmons, 229–243). But William Hasker shows convincingly that Schellenberg's argument is both unsound and self-defeating, since even Reformed epistemologists may embrace arguments of natural theology and Schellenberg's own criterion for acceptable philosophical discourse is itself a question of dispute and so not part

of public philosophical reason (Hasker, “Responding to Challenges,” 289–293).

146 Paul Draper and Ryan Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias in Philosophy of Religion,” The Monist 96, no. 3 (2013): 420–446.

147 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 421.

148 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 421.

149 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 440.

150 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 441–442.

151 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 442.

152 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 442.

153 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 422–423. They add, “Of course, there once was a time when philosophy was considered to be the handmaiden of theology. But that time is long since past, and it would be a mistake to try to turn the clocks back” (439). I disagree, and we may rejoice that the mentality of modernism which they endorse is being rolled back. (The journal alluded to is Faith and Philosophy, the organ of the Society of Christian Philosophers. The reference is to Plantinga's “Advice to Christian Philosophers.”)

154 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 429.

155 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 421.

156 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 422. The first illustration concerns van Inwagen with respect to the problem of evil and the second Plantinga with respect to the modal ontological argument.

157 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 422.

158 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 422. Look it up!

159 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 435.

160 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 426.

161 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 420; cf. 424.

162 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 428. As putative examples of cognitive bias among Christian philosophers of religion, Draper and Nichols point to (i) Reformed Epistemology's claim to religious knowledge without proof and (ii) the failure of so-called “skeptical theists” to apply their skepticism equably to inductive evidence in support of theism. Not only do they fail to show that the problem is due to bias, but they fail to reckon with the facts that the public claim of Reformed Epistemologists is conditional: “If Christian theism is true, then …” and that philosophers who have emphasized our cognitive limitations, like Stephen Wykstra, Michael Bergmann, and me, reject an inductive inference to God's goodness in responding to the “evil god” defense of the problem of evil. Such skepticism is not clearly relevant to fine-tuning arguments for a Designer, since one could hardly say that a malicious Designer has designed the world to only look designed.

163 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 430. They later add, “lest anyone think that our focus on religious philosophers of religion is itself proof of bias, whether conscious or not, on our part, we would like to emphasize that we are not claiming in this paper that the work of nonreligious philosophers of religion is any healthier than the work of their religious counterparts. We simply lack sufficiently compelling data telling us whether or not this is so” (437). This comment is disingenuous. The thrust of their article is that religious philosophy of religion, due to the emotional attachments of its practitioners, is peculiarly susceptible to cognitive bias and therefore less healthy. I consider the question of their own bias momentarily.

164 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 437.

165 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 438.

166 “From our hypothesis that philosophy of religion suffers from cognitive biases and group influence nothing follows about the truth or falsity of any particular philosophical position or about the soundness or unsoundness of any particular philosophical argument” (Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 437).

167 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 425. They further report:

“in the case of confirmation bias, it was found for all groups examined that proponents of an issue sought out more supporting than opposing arguments. This effect was significantly more pronounced for sophisticated respondents, who selected like-minded arguments 70–75 percent of the time. In the case of disconfirmation bias, results showed that participants in both studies, across both issues, took longer to read and process attitudinally challenging arguments” (426).

168 Studies actually show that “religious priming correlates with honesty” (Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 432).

169 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 436.

170 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 436.

171 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 435.

172 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 435.

173 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 435.

174 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 437.

175 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 439.

176 Draper and Nichols, “Diagnosing Bias,” 439. There is no reason to think that arguing for one's favored position, a method which is universal in philosophy, is a case of bias, i.e., a lack of objectivity in the assessment of arguments. This is not the place to discuss their several misunderstandings of apologetics.

177 Thomas Flint, “Introduction,” in Christian Philosophy, ed. Thomas P. Flint (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), xi. This invalidates Trent Dougherty's attempt to differentiate paradigmatic analytic theology from paradigmatic instances of

philosophy of religion on the basis of the former's treatment of topics like soteriological subject matter, historical treatments of the Trinity and incarnation, the role of revelation, and so on, for all of these can be and have been treated by analytic philosophers of religion (Dougherty, “Advice for Analytic Theologians,” 175–176).

178 Plantinga, for example, is not at all reluctant to talk about specifically Christian philosophy (Plantinga, “Christian Philosophy,” 328–352). He distinguishes four divisions of Christian philosophy: (1) apologetics, which, negatively, answers objections to Christian beliefs and, positively, offers arguments in support of Christian beliefs; (2) philosophical theology, which explores the central doctrines of Christian theology utilizing the tools of philosophical analysis; (3) Christian philosophical criticism, which exposes the inadequacy of secular approaches to important philosophical questions; and (4) Christian philosophical construction, which provides a positive Christian understanding of some important philosophical issue. As I have characterized things, (1) and (2) belong to Christian philosophy of religion, while systematic theology includes (2) and the negative aspect of (1). Doubtless the Christian philosopher of religion or systematic theologian will have occasion to indulge in (3) and (4) as well, for example, when treating God's relationship to time or issues in religious epistemology.

179 Stump, “Athens and Jerusalem.” 49. Ironically, Tillich seemed to already realize this fact. He admits, “Every creative philosopher is a hidden theologian (sometimes even a declared theologian). He is a theologian in the degree to which his existential situation and his ultimate concern shape his philosophical vision” (Tillich, Systematic Theology, 1:25). “But,” Tillich insists, “the philosopher does not intend to be a theologian. He wants to serve the universal logos. He tries to turn away from his existential situation, including his ultimate concern, toward a place above all particular places, toward pure reality” (1:25) This is just to say that the philosopher is self-deceived, whereas the theologian sees more clearly.

180 Cf. the struggle of Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger, Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11, to find “a balance between pure neutrality at one extreme and blind bias at the other.”

181 To be discussed more fully in our locus De fide.

182 Shatz, Philosophy and Faith, xiv.

183 Shatz, Philosophy and Faith, xiv–xv. Similarly, Yandell affirms that “Endeavoring to determine the meaning, and the truth value – the sense and the truth-or-falsity – of religious claims is part and parcel of this discipline” (Yandell, Philosophy of Religion: A Contemporary Introduction (New York, Routledge: 2016), xvii). But cf. Michael J. Murray and Michael C. Rea, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, Cambridge Introductions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xii, who take a somewhat more standoffish approach to the evaluative task. They explain that philosophers are usually engaged in the two activities of conceptual clarification and propositional justification. These two activities ask the following two questions: what do those within the discipline mean when they affirm the claims they do, and why do they think those affirmations are true? This is not exactly the same as asking whether their arguments are good ones. Similarly, Rowe, Philosophy of Religion, 2, who characterizes philosophy of religion as the critical examination of basic religious beliefs and concepts. To critically examine a religious belief involves examining the reasons that have been given for and against the belief, with a view to determining whether there is any rational justification for holding that belief to be true or holding it to be false. “Our purpose in carrying out this examination is not to persuade or convince but to acquaint the reader with the sorts of reasons that have been advanced for and against certain basic religious beliefs.” A systematic theologian might well engage in such a non-committal study of theistic arguments.

184 H. H. Price, “Faith and Belief,” in John Hick, ed., Faith and the Philosophers (London: Macmillan, 1964), 3.

185 Michael Glanzberg, “Truth,” in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2023 Edition. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/truth/. Glanzberg surveys current theories of truth.

186 Aristotle Metaphysics IV.7.1011b25.

187 Michael Devitt, Realism and Truth, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 28. Cf. Michael Rea's unfortunate characterization of theological realism as committed to the claim that “theological theories and doctrines … are true only if the objects they apparently refer to genuinely exist” (Rea, Essays in Analytic Theology, 1:7).

188 John Heil observes that while most analytic philosophers would agree that the picture theory – the core idea of which is that the character of reality can be “read off” our (suitably regimented) linguistic representations of reality – is hopeless, it remains widely influential (John Heil, From an Ontological Point of View [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003], 5–6). John Searle takes the picture theory to be based on a misconstrual of a correspondence theory of truth, “a classic example of how we are misled by the surface grammar of words and sentences” (John R. Searle, The Construction of Social Reality [New York: Free Press, 1995], 214; cf. 205). See also Heather Dyke, Metaphysics and the Representational Fallacy, Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2008), 21.

189 See Arvid Båve, “A Deflationary Theory of Reference,” Synthèse 169 (2009): 51–73, for a deflationary theory of reference, a natural accompaniment for a deflationary theory of truth.

190 Cf. John R. Searle, Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 12–13, 61–62, where so-called assertives are said to commit the speaker merely to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. So there are presumably true sentences containing non-referential singular terms like “the weather,” “the way we live now,” or “the reason I like bears” (John R. Searle, Speech

Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], 72–73). In his Construction of Social Reality, chap. 9: “Truth and Correspondence,” Searle makes it quite clear that truth as correspondence does not require that all the singular terms in a true sentence refer. “The correspondence theory is trivially true, but it misleads us because we think facts must be some complex kinds of material objects and ‘correspondence' must name some very general relation of resemblance, or at least isomorphism, between statements and the complex entities that are facts” (213–214), a view he denounces as “absurd” (205).

191 Jody Azzouni, “Deflationist Truth,” in The Oxford Handbook of Truth, ed. Michael Glanzberg (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 477–502.

192 R. C. S. Walker notes that while a correspondence theory can construe truth as a relation between a proposition and something in the world, there is no reason to say anything more than that a proposition is true iff things are as it says they are, which does not commit us even to an ontology of facts. Such an “unexciting” correspondence theory is quite consistent, he points out, with a redundancy theory of the truth predicate (Ralph C. S. Walker, “Theories of Truth,” in Companion to the Philosophy of Language, ed. Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 10 [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997], 313, 321–323, 328).

Construing truth to be the property of corresponding to reality might seem to commit one to the reality of abstracta like propositions, which would be pretty exciting. For reading Tarski bi-conditionals from right to left implies that if S, then it is true that “S.” Tarski's T-schema, though stated for a language L, cannot reasonably be thought to take sentence tokens of L as substituends for S because the right-to-left implication of the Tarski bi-conditionals seems clearly false: If we take “that S” to be a singular term referring to some object, then in many cases the thing that is true can only be some abstract, non-linguistic entity. Take, for example, truths which were true during the early universe like No sentient life exists. If no

sentient life exists, then it is true that no sentient life exists, and the truth bearer which is the referent of the relevant singular term must be an abstract entity.

The reification of a “that” clause seems to me, however, a prime example of an empty nominalization. See A. N. Prior, Objects of Thought, ed. P. T. Geach and A. J. P. Kenny (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 16–30, who rejects “the whole game of ‘nominalizing' what aren't really names of objects at all.” Prior points out that when we say that John fears that so-and-so, we do not mean that John fears a proposition. Rather expressions like “____ fears that ____” have the function of forming sentences from other expressions, the first of which is a name and the second of which is a sentence. They are, as Prior nicely puts it, predicates at one end and sentential connectives at the other. So an expression like “It is true that ___” is a sentential connective, not a property ascription to an object.

In any case the adherent of a neutral logic (see this Systematic Philosophical Theology, vol. IIa, De Deo, pt. I, Attributa Dei 4: Aseity) will be unfazed even by the claim that there is a proposition which is true, since in neutral logic “there is” is no more ontologically committing than the use of singular terms in true statements. As we shall see, neutralism challenges the traditional criterion of ontological commitment of Quinean provenance according to which the values of variables bound by the first-order existential quantifier or referents of singular terms in sentences taken to be true must exist. So even if we take that-clauses like “that snow is white” to be singular terms referring to entities to which truth is ascribed, as in “It is true that snow is white” or alternatively, “That snow is white is true,” we have not thereby committed ourselves to the reality of propositions. The neutralist can help himself with equanimity to statements like “It was true during the Jurassic Period that no human beings exist” and “That no bachelor is married is necessarily true.” For discussion, see my God and Abstract Objects: The Coherence of Theism III: Aseity (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2017), chap. 11.

193 Azzouni, “Deflationist Truth,” 12. Seeing the truth predicate as a device of semantic ascent is the key to Arvid Båve's nominalistc deflationary theory of truth, which is a purely semantic theory of truth. See Arvid Båve, Deflationism: A Use-Theoretic Analysis of the Truth-Predicate, Stockholm Studies in Philosophy 29 (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2006).

194 Azzouni, “Deflationist Truth,” 41.

195 Dyke, Metaphysics and the Representational Fallacy, 5; cf.Heil, From an Ontological Point of View, chap. 7.

196 Dyke, Metaphysics and the Representational Fallacy, 35. Dyke's defense of her view is incomplete because she evidently needs a theory of reference like Båve's, according to which singular terms in a true sentence need not refer to real world objects, which she has not provided. She fails to explain why it is a representational fallacy to infer real world objects from successfully referring singular terms. She merely shows that a sentence can have as its truthmakers something other than the putative objects referred to by the sentence's singular terms. That she rejects standard theories of reference is clear from her asseveration that she never endorses a move from features of language to features of reality.

197 Dyke, Metaphysics and the Representational Fallacy, 164–65.

198 See the seminal article by Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, and Barry Smith, “Truth-Makers,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 44, no. 3 (1984): 287–321. An informative survey of the historical background of truthmaker theory may be found in Peter Simons, “Tatsache II,” in Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer, and Gabriel Gottfried (Basel: Schwabe, 1998), 10:913–916. See further John F. Fox, “Truthmaker,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy 65, no. 2 (1987): 188–207; Herbert Hochberg, “Truth Makers, Truth Predicates, and Truth Types,” in Language, Truth, and Ontology, ed. Kevin Mulligan, Philosophical Studies Series 51 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 87–117.

199 Trenton Merricks, Truth and Ontology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), xvii; cf. 168.

200 Merricks presents persuasive objections to appealing to some totality state of affairs to serve as the truthmaker of negative existentials and universal generalizations, among them the counter-intuitive implication that since “Hobbits do not exist” and “All ravens are black” have the same truthmaker, it follows that if there were white ravens, then the truthmaker for “Hobbits do not exist” would not exist (Merricks, Truth and Ontology, 63). The truthmaker of a dispositional truth like “If this glass were struck, it would shatter” must necessitate all truths entailed by it; but there is no entity that is a truthmaker for that conditional that necessitates “There is no sorcerer who would keep this glass from shattering, were it struck” (162).

201 Merricks, Truth and Ontology, 181.

202 Indeed, Merricks argues that truthmaker theory requires that the truthmakers of a statement are the things that the statement is about (Merricks, Truth and Ontology, 26). This requirement makes truthmaker theory all the more implausible. As Merricks comments, the way in which every true statement is “about something” is not a matter of there being something that that statement is about. To know what a statement is about, he says, is not to know of some object or state of affairs to which that statement is related by an aboutness relation but rather is simply to understand the statement (Merricks, Truth and Ontology, 32–33).

203 A meaningful sentence might be analytic, that is to say, true simply by definition of its terms, e.g., “All bachelors are unmarried,” and therefore trivially true, i.e., uninformative.

204 For example, Stephen Hawking confessed, “I'm a positivist… . I don't demand that a theory correspond to reality because I don't know what it is… . All I'm concerned with is that the theory should predict the results of measurements” (Stephen Hawking in The Nature of Space and Time, by Stephen Hawking and Roger Penrose

[Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996], 121). David Hutchings reminds me that given Hawking's philosophical naiveté, it is not clear that he really means to endorse classical logical positivism. Among philosophers, “it is virtually impossible anymore to find any self-respecting philosopher who will call himself or herself a positivist” (Michael Peterson et al., Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], 3). Zimmerman adds, “Nowadays, hardly any analytic philosophers will still try to argue that theological statements are meaningless, or that the very idea of God is obviously incoherent; and the ones who do are regarded as dinosaurs from a bygone era – the unaccountable age when positivists ruled the earth” (Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 9–10).

205 Paradigmatic examples of proponents of such a view would be Paul Tillich, for whom God cannot be further characterized than as “the ground of being,” and John Hick, who came to hold that the ineffable Real is misrepresented in Christianity as God (John Hick, An Interpretation of Religion [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989]).

206 Out of a concern to avoid fatalism the Polish logician Jan Łukasiewicz in 1930 invented multivalent logic, holding that future contingent propositions are neither true nor false but have a third truth value (Jan Łukasiewicz, “Philosophical Remarks on Many-Valued Systems of Propositional Logic,” in Polish Logic 1920–1939, ed. Storrs McCall [Oxford: Clarendon, 1967], 53). Multivalent logics have since proliferated. There seems to be a popular misimpression that the very existence of multivalent logic calls into question the Principle of Bivalence. This is, however, incorrect, for the uninterpreted many-valued logical syntax implies nothing about the legitimacy of a semantical interpretation of that syntax in terms of propositions and truth values. Indeed, some of the most useful applications of trivalent logic is to electronic switching circuits, where a switch has three possible positions: 0, ½, 1. It is plausible to think that propositions are necessarily bivalent with respect to their truth value, so that a denial of Bivalence for a class of propositions, like

propositions about God, would be gratuitous unless motivated by powerful argument. For discussion see Charles A. Baylis, “Are Some Propositions Neither True nor False?” Philosophy of Science 3, no. 2 (1936): 156–166; A. A. Zinov'ev, Philosophical Problems of Many-Valued Logic, rev. ed., trans. Guido Küng and David Dinsmore Comey, Synthese Library 7 (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1963).

207 As argued by Geisler, Systematic Theology, vol 1, chap. 5; Keith E. Yandell, Philosophy of Religion, xvii–xviii; Stuart C. Hackett, The Reconstruction of the Christian Revelation Claim: A Philosophical and Critical Apologetic (1984; rep. ed. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 17–29. For a critique of theologies exploiting the violation of the Law of Contradiction by certain non-classical logics, see Andrew Ter Ern Loke, “The Law of Non-Contradiction and Global Philosophy of Religion,” Sophia (2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-024-01001-5.

208 Roland Barthes, Image, Music, Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 147, cited in Alvin Plantinga, “The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship,” in Seeking Understanding: The Stob Lectures, 1986–1998, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 134.

209 Plantinga, “Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship,” 133.

210 Crisp, Analyzing Doctrine, 1.

211 See the nice survey in Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:95–100; cf. 26–27.

212 Webster, “Introduction,” 12.

213 Webster, “Introduction,” 12.

214 I am grateful to Andrew Hollingsworth, Armin Krainer, Winfried Löffler, and Tyler McNabb for discussion of matters of Prolegomena.

LOCUS IDe Scriptura Sacra

Sacred Scripture is usually treated in the Prolegomena of classic Protestant systematic theologies, doubtless because of Scripture's foundational character for the remainder of what follows. On the basis of Scripture's authoritative teaching, one seeks to formulate a biblically faithful and coherent doctrine of God, of creation, of salvation, and so on, in conversation with knowledge derived from secular sources. It seems to me, however, that the Scriptures also contain a doctrine of Scripture, so that a locus deserves to be devoted to what the Scriptures teach about themselves. Unfortunately, the doctrine of Scripture is as yet one of the most underdeveloped topics of contemporary philosophical theology. This deficit is hardly due to any lack of importance or intrinsic philosophical interest of the topic, for it is foundational to Christian systematic theology and bristles with fascinating philosophical questions. While Christian philosophical theologians have had something to say about the closely related topic of divine revelation, they have not yet progressed to discuss at much length the doctrine of Scripture.1

At first blush it might seem viciously circular to inquire after Scripture's doctrine of Scripture. But here we need to recall the distinction made in our Prolegomenon between the theological question of the entailments of Christian doctrine and the apologetical question of the grounds for believing those entailments.2 Unlike the presuppositionalist, we are not here concerned with how we come to be justified or warranted in believing Christian truth claims; rather we want merely to ask what those truth claims are.3 It is indisputable that Christian theology has historically looked to Scripture as the basic source of its content. Since Scripture is the norma normans of Christian doctrine, we want to know what the Scriptures teach with respect to the Scriptures and so what the Christian religion has to say about its normative sources. Later we can ask, if we wish to, the apologetical question of whether and/or how belief in that doctrine may be justified or warranted.

1 Revelation and Scripture

Traditionally the Scriptures have been understood to be a special revelation from God (revelatio specialis et supernaturalis). The immediate question arises as to whether the Scriptures teach or imply that they should be so understood. The question whether the Scriptures should count as divine revelation turns out to be largely terminological, depending as it does on what one means by "revelation." Even if the Scriptures are taken to be verbally inspired and so authoritative for Christian doctrine, they may not count as divine revelation under certain understandings of that term.

1.1 Divine Revelation: Act, Content, or Experience?

"Revelation" has been understood variously by theologians to refer (i) to an action (e.g., God's act of revealing something), (ii) to the thing revealed (e.g., God reveals himself), or (iii) to the subjective experience of a conscious subject (e.g., the subjective grasping of something revealed by God). By way of analogy, the words "declaration" or "proclamation" may refer either to the act of declaring or proclaiming or to what is declared or proclaimed, and the word "realization" refers to a conscious experience on someone's part. So the English word "revelation" is ambiguous. Thus, for example, Herman Bavinck understands revelation to be an act that God does, namely, "that deliberate and free act of God by which he makes himself known to human beings in order that by it they may come to stand in the right relation to him."4 Swinburne, on the other hand, takes revelation to be the content of what is revealed, in the present case Christian doctrine.5 Mavrodes, for his part, takes divine revelation to be a subjective experience of coming to realize something due to God's communicating or manifesting it to us.6

Now clearly if revelation is understood exclusively to be an act or an experience, then the Scriptures cannot be a divine revelation, since they are neither an act performed by God nor the experience of a conscious subject. Since "revelation" is used in idiomatic English in

all three of these ways, however, it would seem to be unjustified to limit its reference to just one of the three alternatives.7

Mavrodes says very little to justify his construing revelation exclusively as a kind of experience. His appeal is simply to idiomatic uses of “to reveal” involving a conscious experiencer. But while there are certainly examples of idiomatic uses of “to reveal” which imply a conscious experiencer, there are other uses not involving a conscious, experiencing subject which also seem idiomatic, for example, “Blackbeard revealed the location of the buried treasure on a secret map.” Mavrodes would exclude such apparently idiomatic uses apart from the experience of, for example, some archaeologist or treasure hunter who discovers the lost map. That seems prejudicial. Moreover, while the Scriptures plausibly sometimes use “revelation” to designate the personal experience of the addressee (II Cor 12.1, 7; Gal 2.2; Eph 3.3), in other cases “revelation” designates, not the experience, but the objective thing revealed. For example, “how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?… When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation” (I Cor 14.6, 26). “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein” (Rev 1.1–3; cf. 1.11, 19).8 In both these cases revelations seem to be linguistic utterances. Dogmatic theology has traditionally used “revelation” to designate the Scriptures, so that such usage is firmly established. On other occasions, especially, as we shall see, in an eschatological context, “revelation” seems to refer to a divine act such as the parousia of Jesus Christ (I Pet 1.7, 13) or the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom 8.19).

Appeals to ordinary language uses of “to reveal” and “revelation” are not, then, it seems, probative for ruling out various uses of the terms.

Charity would require us to recognize the dispute to be terminological, requiring us merely to clarify the way in which we are using the words. The experiential understanding of revelation might be called subjective revelation and the non-experiential understandings objective revelation.9 So, for example, the book of the Law might be an objective revelation from God of his will even if the book has been lost and remains unread; when discovered and read, the readers experience a subjective revelation of God's will, but its objective status remains unaltered (II Kg 22). The subjective view, while having an apparent affinity to the claim of certain dialectical theologians that the Bible becomes the Word of God for those who find by means of it a divine-human encounter, thus need not exclude the reality of objective revelation as well. Objective revelation, whether construed as an act of God or as what God reveals, is intrinsically the same regardless of its personal appropriation, so that the difference between objective and subjective revelation lies in the human percipients.

If we do adopt an exclusively subjective understanding of "revelation," then we simply need to adopt different terminology to express an objective understanding of God's relation to Scripture. Even if Scripture is not, experientially speaking, a divine revelation, it can be held to be a divine communication.10 Then all the same questions will arise again concerning whether this communication is inspired, authoritative, and truthful.

1.2 Is Revelation the Disclosure of Something Otherwise Unknown?

The next relevant question to be asked is whether revelation entails the disclosure of something otherwise unknown.11 As we shall see, this question became explosive in seventeenth century Europe with the publication of Spinoza's Tractatus theologico-politicus (1670) and the debate it engendered between Jean Le Clerc and Richard Simon over the nature of biblical inspiration.

Etymologically, the most important NT word for revelation, apokalypsis and its cognates, has the sense of uncovering something that was hidden. Etymology is not, however, a reliable guide to meaning, and many other words connected with divine revelation, such as the OT word galah (Aramaic gelah) and the NT word phaneroō, lack such an etymology. These words have a variety of meanings, and whether they are translated by the English word "reveal" depends in some measure upon the translator's understanding of the meaning of the English word. If one thinks that the English word implies the disclosure of something otherwise unknown, then that translation will be shunned in cases where the Hebrew or Greek words do not involve such disclosure.

A more reliable guide to meaning will be context. Scriptural terms for revelation are very frequently associated with the disclosure of mysteries or secrets, e.g., "The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things that are revealed [galah] belong to us and to our children forever" (Dt 29.29); "both of them showed [galah] themselves to the garrison of the Philistines; and the Philistines said, 'Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hid themselves'" (I Sam 14.11); "A gossip reveals [galah] secrets" (Prov 20.19; cf. 11.43); "the LORD God does nothing, without revealing [galah] his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3.7); "there is a God in heaven who reveals [gelah] mysteries" (Dan 2.28; cf. 2.47); "thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed [apokalyptō] them to babes… . no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal [apokalyptō] him" (Mt 11.25, 27); "Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered [apokalyptō], and nothing secret that will not become known" (Lk 12.2); "the revelation [apokalypsis] of the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed [phaneroō] and through the prophetic writings is made known [gnōrizō] to all nations" (Rom 16.25–26), "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest [phaneroō] to his saints" (Col 1.26); "the mystery was made known [gnōrizō] to me by revelation [apokalypsis]… . the mystery of Christ, which was not made known [gnōrizō] to the sons

of men in other generations as it has now been revealed [apokalyptō] to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3.4–5; cf. 3.9).

If revelation implies the disclosure of something otherwise unknown, then two further implications follow: (i) Much of the Bible cannot be said to be revelation, since it conveys information, for example, historical information, previously known. Even if the Gospel biographies of Jesus, for example, were verbally inspired, they would not be revelation in this sense. Perhaps one might plausibly argue that if any of the content of some writing is revelatory, then the whole counts as revelation, since no revelation could realistically be comprised entirely of unknown material. Pannenberg observes that virtually all biblical revelations imply some prior knowledge of the God who reveals.12 Still, on this view no revelation could consist entirely of previously known material, even if verbally inspired by God. (ii) Revelation becomes person-relative, for something already known to one person may be unknown to another. In that case the same information conveyed by God to both persons may count as a revelation in one case but not in the other. Thus, for example, the Gospel of Luke, if inspired by God, may not have been a revelation to readers who were eyewitnesses of the events, but it may have been so to Luke's patron Theophilus.

Mavrodes incorporates the person-relativity of revelation into his general schema (S) for formulating revelation claims, whether secular or religious:

(S). m reveals a to n by means of k (at a time t and location l),

where m is the revealing agent, whether personal or impersonal; a is the content of the revelation; n is a conscious individual capable of a cognitive experience of revelation; and k is the means or mode of revelation, whether some sort of communication from m or manifestation of m.13 Any true revelation claim expresses a

proposition of the form (S), with the possible omission of k. (S) is intended to capture revelation claims in a general sense, including "perfectly idiomatic uses" of "to reveal" in "linguistic contexts that are about as non-religious as any context can be."14 t, l are enclosed in parentheses to indicate that they are not of great interest in the schema; neither, in Mavrodes' opinion, is k essential, since God could reveal something immediately to someone without employing any means. Although persons are an important class of revealing agents, Mavrodes appeals to idiomatic statements like "The footprints revealed that one of the travelers was a child" and "The depth of their interest is revealed by the fact that not one of them bothered to come" to show that situations and impersonal entities can also be said to reveal. In the second example m is said to be a fact, which is not even a concrete object and so hardly deserving of the label "agent." In cases like this m is causally inert and completely passive, perhaps even non-existent (unless Platonism is true), so that revelation is wholly a subjective experience on the part of a discerning subject. Neither need n be a person. For example, "The scent revealed to the bloodhounds the criminal's trail" is an idiomatic sentence involving conscious individuals who are not persons.

Mavrodes includes n in his schema, however, not because a must be otherwise unknown to n, but because, as we have seen, Mavrodes takes revelation to be a species of experience. In fact, divine revelation appears nowhere among the instantiations of the variables in (S), for even the content a is not on Mavrodes' view a revelation. If we do take instantiations of a to be objective revelations, however, then the fact that they are person-directed does make them person-relative. The Scriptures could be an instantiation of a and an author, quill, and ink instantiations of k.

As to the question whether revelation must involve a disclosure of something previously or otherwise unknown, the same Hebrew and Greek words can be used to convey the ideas of declaring or proclaiming or making manifest, which do not entail that the relevant content is otherwise unknown, e.g., "A copy of the document was to be issued [galah] as a decree in every province by proclamation,

calling on all the peoples to be ready for that day" (Est 3.14; cf. 8.13); "The LORD has made known his victory; he has revealed [galah] his vindication in the sight of the nations" (Ps 98.2); "Open [galah] my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps 119.18); "the grass is gone, and new growth appears [galah]" (Prov 27.25); "Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed [galah]?" (Is 53.1); "soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed [galah]" (Is 56.1); "I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase… and the open [galah] copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch … in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase" (Jer 32.10–12; cf. 32.14); "the wrath of God is revealed [apokalyptō] from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain [phaneros] to them, because God has shown [phaneroō] it to them" (Rom18–19); "you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation [apokalypsis] of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom 2.5); "the creation waits eagerly for the revealing [apokalypsis] of the sons of God" (Rom 8.19); "that the genuineness of your faith… may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation [apokalypsis] of Jesus Christ" (I Pet 1.7; cf. 1.13; 4.13); "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest [phaneroō] in him" (Jn 9.3); "that a notable sign has been performed through them is manifest [phaneros] to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Acts 4.16); "the works of the flesh are plain [phaneros]" (Gal 5.19); "you show [phaneroō] that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us" (II Cor 3.3; cf. 4.11; 5.10,11,12; 7.12; 11.6); "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known [gnōrizō] to God" (Phil 4.6); "Tychicus will tell [gnōrizō] you all about my affairs" (Col 4.7; cf. 4.9). Such passages make it evident that the Hebrew and Greek words do not entail the disclosure of something otherwise unknown. The real question is whether the English word "revelation" carries such an implication. Idiomatic sentences like "The President revealed his

Supreme Court nominee in the Rose Garden ceremony, even though everyone knew it was Amy Barrett" seem perfectly possible.

1.3 Is "Revelation" a Success Term?

The question also arises as to whether "to reveal" is a so-called "success term," that is to say, a term which entails the realization of the intended objective.15 On this understanding, it is not possible that God reveal a to n and n fail to apprehend a. If n fails to apprehend a, despite m's endeavor to reveal a to n, a genuine revelation of a has not occurred.16 It might appear that Mavrodes endorses the understanding of revelation as a success term. He makes an interesting comparison of revelation and proof. Both are person-relative. If something has been proved, then there is someone to whom it has been proved, and if something has been revealed, then there is someone to whom it has been revealed. Both proof and revelation entail truth, since it makes no sense to say that some proposition has been proved or revealed and yet is false. Thus, a person who is in a position to assert that something has been proved or revealed is in an equally strong position to assert the truth itself. This results in certain pragmatic paradoxes: it would be paradoxical to affirm that some proposition has been proved or revealed to n but that I do not believe it, just as it would be paradoxical to affirm that a proposition is true but that I do not believe it. But while it would be paradoxical for James to say, "John proved it to me, but I do not believe it," it would not be paradoxical, it seems, for John to say, "I proved it to James, but he does not believe it." For James may not understand or may resist the proof. Similarly, it does not seem paradoxical to say, "God revealed to James that he loves him, but James does not believe it." Thus, Mavrodes' analysis does not commit him to revelation's being a success term. At most it requires a conscious subject to whom the revelation is addressed and who experiences a cognitive encounter with its subject matter. A

recipient of a revelation might not think his experience veridical and, hence, revelatory.17

1.4 Modes of Biblical Revelation

1.4.1 Models of Revelation

Mavrodes distinguishes between two broad modes of revelation, which he calls the communication model and the manifestation model.18 He nicely illustrates the difference between these two modes of revelation by inviting us to imagine four speakers who make the following four statements respectively:

Sí, hablo inglés bastante bien.

I've lived in Mexico for several years, and I can speak Spanish tolerably well.

Of course, I'm a native speaker of English.

Hablo italiano también.

The first speaker says that he can speak English but does not manifest that fact, since he does not utter an English sentence. The second speaker, by contrast, manifests the fact that he can speak English but does not say that he can. The third speaker both says that he can speak English and manifests that he can. The fourth speaker, on the other hand, neither says that he can speak English nor manifests his ability to do so. The communication model "is closely tied to notions such as those of saying something, telling somebody something, asserting something, asking about something, making a request, giving a command, and similar illocutionary acts."19 Although much of the communication will be verbal in nature, that is not an essential feature of this mode, for such acts

may be performed, for instance, by signing or signaling. “The manifestation model, on the other hand, invites us to think of acts in which some fact is made available for perception and apperception.”20 Not just facts, however; in many cases what may become manifest is the revealer himself.

Traditionally, sacred Scripture was taken to be an instance of the communication model, literally God’s Word to man.21 But with the rise of modern biblical criticism, the view of the Bible as a propositional, or better sentential, revelation from God has been eclipsed in favor of construing divine revelation along the lines of the manifestation model as God’s self-revelation to man.22 Mavrodes is aware of this sea change that has occurred in theology but points out that a self-manifestation is not limited to revealing only the person involved but very typically reveals various propositional facts as well. He provides the charming illustration of the eavesdropper who, stepping out from behind the draperies, thereby reveals not only himself but also the fact that he is there. Innumerable other facts are thereby revealed as well, e.g., that he is a man, that he is dressed in a shirt and pants, that one’s conversation has been overheard, and so forth. Mavrodes admonishes:

Evidence, therefore, that in a certain situation a thing of a certain category has been revealed need not always be taken as evidence that nothing of any other category has there been revealed. To return to the theological case, we might have reason to believe or say that in a certain act or situation God had revealed Himself. We should not, however, be too hasty to take that as a reason for refusing to believe or to say that in that very same act God had revealed some proposition or doctrine.23

Even the modern Protestant theologian will typically want to affirm that God’s self-revelation in Jesus entails such truths as that God has revealed himself in Christ, God may be encountered in Scripture, God may be apprehended through faith, God is not to be approached with self-righteousness and pride, God is wholly other,

God is love, and so on. Only a complete apophatic mysticism will shun the affirmation of various truths about God as a result of his self-revelation, a position which is seemingly incoherent.

1.4.2 Varieties of Revelations Described in the Bible

William Abraham aptly characterizes revelation as described in the Bible as “a polymorphous rather than a monomorphous activity” that supervenes on other divine acts to disclose the character, nature, and purposes of God.24 The Bible describes a wide variety of ways in which God reveals himself, which can be classed as examples of the communication and manifestation models respectively.25 Bavinck holds that Scripture teaches that God reveals himself to human beings by means of the whole of nature and all of history, what theologians would call general revelation, and by special revelations via theophany, prophecy, and miracle. Bavinck provides abundant scriptural examples of theophany, which finds its culmination in Christ, in whom God is most fully revealed (Jn 1.14; 14.9; Col 1.15; Heb 1.1–3, etc.). Prophecy is God’s communication of his thoughts to human beings, whether aurally or through lower forms of manticism shared with paganism like the lot, the Urim and Thummim, the dream, and the vision. The highest form of prophetic revelation is via interior illumination of prophetic messengers, again culminating in Jesus (Jn 1.1,18; 17.8; Heb 1.1–2). Miracles are God’s mighty works or wonders, extraordinary deeds of divine power which Scripture distinguishes from the ordinary order of nature and which serve as demonstrations and signs of God’s presence. On Mavrodes’ scheme, general revelation would be an example of the manifestation model of revelation, as would be theophany, certain lower forms of manticism, and miracles, while dreams, visions, and prophecies would or could be examples of the communication model, which, it will be remembered, for Mavrodes involves speech acts.

While not entirely ignoring God's revelation in nature, Pannenberg identifies five forms of divine revelation in the OT: (1) manticism, whether inductive (casting lots) or intuitive (dreams and prophetic trances), (2) theophanies, in which God is both seen and heard, (3) the communicating of the divine name to Moses, (4) the revelation of the will of God at Mt. Sinai, and (5) the occurrence of revelatory historical events, whether miraculous or non-miraculous, often accompanied by a prophetic word. It is not clear that these are really five distinct forms of revelation rather than merely examples of significant revelatory events in the OT. (It is hard, for example, to see a difference in kind between (3) and (4).) Of these five forms Pannenberg thinks that the second, third, and fifth have God himself as both the source and content of the revelation, which would make them examples of the manifestation model. While that classification is certainly correct for (2) and perhaps for (5), the content of a revelatory historical event is not God but some information about God, for example, that God is on Israel's side. While (3) involves a theophany, still it is stated explicitly as an instance of divine communication to Moses. (1) is ambiguous, since dreams or trances could involve either a communication from God or a manifestation of God. A prophetic message inspired by God, which both (1) and (5) may feature, is clearly the paradigm example of the communication model.

A very different concept of revelation that seems to fall outside Mavrodes' models emerges in Jewish apocalyptic expectation. Apocalyptic texts, Pannenberg explains, speak of revelation in two ways. First, there is the disclosure of the eschatological future by the vision which is communicated to the seer. This corresponds to revelation in intuitive manticism and the prophetic word and so is plausibly an example of the communication model. But secondly, there is the future occurrence of what is foreseen, the final manifestation of what is still hidden in God. This seems more akin to the manifestation model of revelation. But the eschatological notion of revelation is bound up with the idea of the fulfillment of what is foreseen or promised. This notion of revelation becomes important in

the NT in connection with the return of Christ. I Pet 1.7, 13 asks that "the genuineness of your faith … may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ … set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." While Pannenberg acknowledges Paul's teaching that God's power and deity are revealed in the works of creation (Rom 1.19), which recalls similar statements in the Psalms and Jewish wisdom literature, he thinks that most NT texts having to do with revelation concern the apocalyptic schema.

So one mode of biblical revelation is certainly divine communication. Despite contemporary theology's proclivity toward the manifestation model as the mode of God's self-revelation, it is indisputable that in the Bible divine revelation often takes place through verbal communication, particularly to and through prophets.

1.5 Scripture as a Divine Communication

1.5.1 Old Testament Scriptures

Our interest lies in Scripture as a communication from God that may or may not count as a divine revelation depending upon one's understanding of that term. Let us begin by looking at the NT authors' view of the OT Scriptures. Two critical passages for understanding the Scripture's doctrine of Scripture are II Pet 1.21 and II Tim 3.16.26

1.5.1.1 II Pet 1.21 and II Tim 3.16

The first of these indicates the source of OT prophecy: "no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Pet 1.20–21). The notion of

interpretation (epilyseōs) has to do with an explanation of the meaning of the prophecy, such as is featured in the interpretation of dreams or visions. The phrase “a matter of one’s own interpretation” (idias epilyseōs) may refer to either the prophet’s interpretation or the reader’s interpretation.27 In either case, the emphasis is that there is an objective and correct meaning of the prophecy because it originates in the activity of the Holy Spirit and so has a God-given meaning. It is noteworthy that the author is not talking about the general religious phenomenon of prophetic utterances well-known in the Greek and Hellenistic spheres but specifically about prophecies of Scripture. Scriptural prophecies are said not to have been borne or carried along (ēnechthē) by human will; rather men borne or carried along (pheromenoi) by the Holy Spirit spoke, and therefore what they spoke is from God (apo theou). 28 Just as in vv. 17–18 the divine voice was “borne” (enechtheisēs, enechtheisan) from heaven at Jesus’ transfiguration, so also through the prophets God speaks. By contrast, on person-relative views, such as the author of II Peter opposes, prophecy results from merely human impulse. No wonder then that the author advises his readers, “You will do well to pay attention to this [the prophetic word] as to a lamp shining in a dark place” (II Pet 1.19)! For what the OT prophets say, God says.

Now, technically speaking, the fact that God speaks via the OT prophets authorizes only prophetic statements as God’s Word, not all of Jewish Scripture. Such direct statements by God himself attest to his own authority, not to the authority of Scripture. Similarly, in the OT the law is presented as just as much direct divine discourse as prophecy; indeed, Moses was characterized as a prophet. But in speaking of “the prophetic word” in v. 19, the author may well employ synecdoche to refer to all of the OT.29 As used elsewhere, the phrase ton prophētikov logon is basically synonymous to “Scripture,” an equivalence that Bauckham says came about because in the Jewish understanding all inspired Scripture was prophecy. The problem is that the phrase “the prophetic word,” like the English word “Scripture,” is used to designate either single passages or several passages or the OT generally. In II Pet 1.20–21 the author seems to

be singling out specifically prophetic activity instigated by God's Spirit.30

Be that as it may, II Tim 3.16 assures us, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." Exegetes are divided as to whether pasa graphē means "every Scripture," that is to say, every passage in the Scriptures, or "all Scripture," that is to say, the Scriptures taken together as a whole.31 Fortunately, the debate is academic, for as Marshall points out, "To say 'All of the Scripture' is in effect to say 'every passage of Scripture', and therefore in the end of the day a decision is not important."32 33 Marshall also rightly rejects the translation "Every/all Scripture that is inspired is also profitable …," as though the author of II Timothy might have believed that only selected passages of Scripture were inspired. So in II Tim 3.16 inspiration extends beyond prophecy to all of Jewish Scripture.

The most notable feature of the affirmation of II Tim 3.16 is that, in marked contrast to Hellenistic Judaism (e.g., 4 Ezra 14.22; Philo Special Laws 1.65; 4.49), here it is not prophets or even the authors of Scripture who are said to be inspired but rather the Scriptures themselves.34 So in II Tim 3.16 inspiration extends beyond prophecy to all of Jewish Scripture.

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instruction in Christian doctrine (didaskalia; cf. Rom 15.4). Mounce notes that in the pastoral epistles, didaskalia is the technical term for the doctrinal formulation of Scripture.38 “Rather than describing the basic message of the gospel, διδασκαλία describes the doctrinal formulations of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim 4:6).”39 Mounce similarly takes “reproof” (elegmos) to indicate the conviction of false doctrine.40 Scripture thus serves not only the end of preaching but also of sound teaching (II Tim 4.2–3).41

1.5.1.2 The Divine Authority of the Old Testament

Moreover, it is evident that other NT authors believed that it was God who spoke through the OT writers. Paul, for example, asks, “Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses… ” (I Cor 9.8–9), thereby implying the divine authority of what is written in the law. But this common Pauline phrase “it is written,” employed 16 times in the letter to the Romans alone, extends far beyond the commandments of the law (e.g., Rom 1.17; 2.24; 3.4, 10–18, etc.). All of OT Scripture is invested with the same divine authority. For that reason Paul takes Scripture as the authoritative basis for his development of doctrine, thereby setting an example for future systematic theologians. The theological agenda for Romans (Rom 1.16–17) is set by Hab 2.4. That Paul, and other NT authors with him, should lend a novel interpretation to this and other scriptural statements does not detract from the fact that they took the Scriptures to be authoritative; on the contrary, the very novelty of their interpretations evinces the necessity in their minds of an appeal to Scripture as the basis of one’s teaching. For Paul, “the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom 3.2), a designation that goes beyond the utterances of the prophets or the commandments of the law, as shown by his immediate citation of Psalm 51.4 (Rom 3.4; cf. Heb 5.12). Paul even ascribes direct divine discourse, not to God, but to Scripture: “For the scripture says to Pharaoh…” (Rom 9.17), citing God’s prophetic words to Pharaoh in

Ex 9.16; and again, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying…” (Gal 3.8), citing God’s promise to Abraham in Gen. 12.3.42 This remarkable locution is more than a quotation of what God said as recorded in Scripture, but rather personifies Scripture as the one foreseeing, promising, and speaking.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit is said to speak, not only through the OT prophets (Acts 3.16; 26.22; 28.25), but also through the Psalmist David: “the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David” (Acts 1.16); “Sovereign Lord, … who by the mouth of our father David, thy servant, didst say by the Holy Spirit…” (Acts 4.24); “God… says also in another psalm…” (Acts 13.35, citing Ps 16.10). Similarly, in Hebrews the author not only quotes direct divine discourse as spoken by the Holy Spirit (Heb 3.7), but he also quotes a number of scriptural passages, mostly from the Psalms, most of which do not involve direct divine discourse, as though they were spoken by God himself: “he says …, he says …, of the son [he says]… .” (Heb 1.6–10) and says that God spoke “through David” (Heb 4.7).

As the Evangelists portray him, Jesus of Nazareth regarded the Jewish Scriptures as given by the Holy Spirit and therefore as authoritative in all that they teach. We are not now concerned with the question whether this conviction represented the actual view of the historical Jesus but with the question whether the canonical Jesus and therefore the Evangelists held such a view of the Jewish Scriptures.

It is evident that the canonical Jesus does, indeed, hold such a view of Scripture.43 Scriptural quotations on Jesus’ part of direct discourse by God, whether in the commandments of the law or the utterances of the prophets in the Lord’s name, are of course regarded as divine communications and therefore as authoritative.44 But even where God is not the speaker, Jesus regards the statements of the OT as having a divine authority superseded, remarkably, only by his own authority (wherein we find the makings

of a high Christology). In disputes with his opponents, Jesus looked to Scripture as the final court of appeal. For example, in the temptation narrative (Lk 4.1–13), Jesus appeals three times to Scripture in order to repulse Satan, who also bears witness to Scripture's final authority by citing it himself! Jesus' successive citations of Dt 8.3; 6.13; 6.16, as well as Satan's quotation of Ps 91.11–12 are noteworthy because they do not represent direct divine discourse but rather Moses' admonitions to the people and the Psalmist's reflections. Similarly, in opposition to the chief priests and Pharisees, Jesus closes his parable of the wicked tenants of the vineyard (Mt 21.33–46) by asking, "Have you never read in the scriptures…," and citing Ps 118. 22–23. This stinging rebuke is oft repeated: "Have you not read…" (Mt 12.3; cf. 1 Sam 21.1–6); "Have you not read…" (Mt 12.5; cf. Num 28.9–10); "Have you not read…" (Mt 19.4; cf. Gen 1.27; 2.24); "Have you never read…" (Mt 21.16; cf. Ps 8.2). In the same way, Jesus rebukes the Sadducees because "you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (Mt 22.29). These quotations of non-divine discourse are interspersed without discrimination with explicit quotations of direct divine discourse, such as Mt 22.31, "Have you not read what was said to you by God …" (cf. Ex 3.6).

Closely related to the expression "have you not read" as a means of citing authoritative Scripture is the expression "it is written." In the temptation narrative, Scriptural quotations are introduced in this way, as we have seen. In Matthew 11.10; 21.13; 26.31; Mk 11.17; Lk 7.27, however, the phrase is used to introduce divine first person discourse from the OT. Here the fact that God is the speaker does become important. For the esteem in which Scripture is held is evident in the use of the idiom "it is written" rather than "God said."

Jesus sometimes introduces scriptural quotations of direct discourse by ascribing them appropriately to either God or a human author; but he also conflates the two by saying things like "David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared…" (Mk 12.36), quoting Ps 110.1, implying that God is speaking through David, or "He who made them from the beginning… said…" (Mt 19.4–5), citing the human author of Gen

2.24 as though God himself were speaking. Alluding to direct divine discourse in either Is 44.2–3 or Zech 14.8, Jesus introduces the citation by saying, “the scripture has said…” (Jn 7.38). Similarly, in Jn 10.34–36 we have a curious blend of God’s first person speech with what Scripture guarantees:

Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

Jesus begins by asking, “Is it not written in your law…” but citing, not the law proper, but Ps 82.6, thereby putting them on the same level. The quotation is a first person statement by the God of Israel. An OT idiom for prophetic utterance “the word of God [or the LORD] came” (Gen 15.1; I Kg 12.22; 19.9; 21.17; II Chron 11.2; Jer 2.1; Ez 11.4; Jon 1.1; Hag 2.20; Zech 7.8; Lk 3.2, etc.) is employed to characterize that quotation, though in this case the word comes, not to the prophet, but directly from God to its addressees (ekeinous pros hous ho logos tou theou egeneto). One would think that such first person speech by God himself would be self-authorizing; but Jesus adds the odd caveat “and Scripture cannot be broken,” as if to guarantee God’s utterance. The statements of God and the Scripture become so closely identified as to become indistinguishable. In terms of its authority, what Scripture says, God says.

Furthermore, the canonical Jesus believed that the OT in all its parts and as a whole pointed to him as its theme and necessary fulfillment. “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me” (Jn 5.39). The Risen Lord instructs his disciples, “‘These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and

on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem'" (Lk 24.44–47; cf. Lk 24.25–27). We see here so clearly the conviction of the NT church of the centrality of Jesus to the message of the Jewish Scriptures in every major part and the necessity of their fulfillment. Jesus could have avoided his passion, "But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so? … But all this has taken place, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Mt 26.54–56). Scripture, as Jesus said, cannot be broken.

What, in Jesus' mind, is the source of the supreme authority possessed by Scripture? The only possible answer is: God himself. The commandments of the law and the utterances of the prophets are divine speech and therefore are God's Word to us (Mt 5.17–20). More than that, however; for as we have seen, not only in the law and the prophets but also in the so-called writings, such as the Psalms, the Holy Spirit speaks (Mk 12.26). Therefore, scriptural statements not directly uttered by God can nonetheless be rightly regarded as something that God said (Mt 19.4–5). For Jesus the Jewish Scriptures are a divine communication to man and therefore carry the authority of God himself.

The crucial property of Scripture that emerges clearly from our survey is the authority of Scripture. The Jewish Scriptures are taken to possess divine authority, and therefore the writers of the NT base their doctrine upon its teachings. The source of that authority is in turn its inspiration by God. In some mysterious way God brought about the Scriptures with the result that they are God-breathed, and so God's Word to us. Already it should be evident that the Christian Scriptures have a very robust doctrine of Scripture, whose implications we shall want to explore.

1.5.2 New Testament Scriptures

Thus far we have considered only the Jewish Scriptures, which were the Bible of the earliest Christians. Can we learn anything from Scripture about the NT Scriptures? Lee McDonald, following Sundberg, distinguishes three stages in the formation of the NT canon: (i) the rise of NT writings to the status of Scripture, (ii) the conscious grouping of such literature into closed collections (e.g., the four Gospels and the Pauline Epistles), and finally (iii) the later formation of a closed list of authoritative literature (a complete canon).45 Our interest is primarily in stage (i). McDonald implicitly distinguishes two even earlier proto-stages with respect to stage (i): first, the treatment of the Jesus tradition as divinely authoritative and therefore on a par with OT Scripture, and, second, the NT writings' functioning authoritatively as Scripture in the life and worship of the early church alongside the OT Scriptures even before they were explicitly called "Scripture." The first occurred immediately in the Christian church and the second almost immediately upon the appearance of the NT documents.

We have already alluded to the extraordinary sense of authority with which Jesus of Nazareth spoke and taught. At the close of Matthew's account of the sermon on the mount with its startling antitheses between Mosaic law and tradition and Jesus' "But I say to you …," Matthew comments, "When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7.28). In the understanding of the Evangelists Jesus even presumed to revise Mosaic law, thereby equating his own authority with that of Scripture and, hence, of God: "Thus he declared all foods clean" (Mk 7.19); "But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress" (Mt 5.32; cf. Mk 10.5–6). Indeed, in response to the scribes' protest, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus both claims and demonstrates "that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2.9).

1.5.2.1 Apostolic Authority

What is significant for our purposes is that Jesus in turn gives his divine authority to his apostles. For example, Jesus sends out his twelve disciples on mission throughout Israel: “He called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits… . These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, … ‘Preach as you go… . And if any one will not receive you or listen to your words …, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town’” (Mt 10.1–15). Although Jesus had many more apostolic missionaries (Lk 10.1–20), the special significance of the twelve disciples is evident in the correlation between their number and the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. Indeed, Jesus says to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19.28). The canonical Jesus had looked beyond his death to found a church under the authoritative direction of the apostles which would endure: “I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16.18–19). The enormous esteem in which the twelve apostles were held in the early church is evident in John’s vision of the New Jerusalem, which “had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed… . And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev 21.12–14). These twelve apostles had been charged by the Risen Lord with carrying forward the teaching of Jesus into all the world: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28.18–20).

To guarantee the apostles' faithfully transmitting the Jesus tradition, John calls upon the Holy Spirit: "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14.25–26; cf. 15.26–27). In praying for the disciples Jesus emphasizes the transmission of his words by the apostles to others: "I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me… . As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world… . I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word" (Jn 17.8, 18–20). The Holy Spirit will guarantee not only accurate recall of Jesus' teachings but also deeper penetration into those teachings, for the Spirit of God will guide the disciples with divine authority into truths not explicitly stated by Jesus: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (Jn 16.12–13).46 John's own Gospel is presented as the faithful testimony to Jesus that was promised: "This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true" (Jn 20.24).

Similarly, Paul, who was himself counted an apostle like the Twelve, was acutely aware of his authority as an apostle of the Risen Lord. "For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you" (II Cor 10.8); "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you" (II Cor 12.12); "you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me" (II Cor 13.3); "I write this while I am away from you, in order that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority which the Lord has given me" (II Cor 13.10); "though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required" (Philemon 8). For Paul the apostles were the bearers of divine revelation from God: "you can

perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3.4–5; cf. 2.20). In fact, Paul ranked the apostles even above NT prophets, who brought fresh revelations from the Lord: "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third…" (I Cor 12.28).

Given the plurality of apostles, sticky situations could arise in which they found themselves in disagreement with one another. A disagreement over John Mark's suitability for mission led to a serious division between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15.39). Paul relates that he publicly dressed down Peter himself because of Peter's withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentile believers in Antioch under the pressure of certain Jewish Christians (Gal 2.11–16). But in such cases the disputes were personal, not doctrinal. Indeed, Paul rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy in not living up to what he correctly believed and taught: "We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified" (Gal 2.15–16). More serious would be the difference between Paul and James concerning justification by faith alone (Jas 2.14–26); but the disagreement here is plausibly a matter of emphasis: both apostles would agree that works are a necessary condition of genuine faith in the sense that living faith necessarily issues in good works. Unanimity of doctrine was important. Thus, when the Jerusalem Council decided the divisive question of the relationship of Gentile converts to Jewish law (Acts 15.1–29), the apostles acted in concert to promulgate an authoritative decision, saying, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us… ."

1.5.2.2 The Authority of the Jesus Tradition

While aware of his apostolic authority, Paul was also acutely conscious of the Jesus tradition which had been transmitted to him. He cites an extremely early formula concerning the events of Jesus'

passion and resurrection (I Cor 15.3–5), identifying it as a summary of the preaching of all the apostles (I Cor 15.11). The Gospel proclaimed by the apostles was regarded as the very word of God to people: “when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (I Thess 2.13).47 That Paul also knew the context of the Jesus traditions he cites is evident from his words “on the night when he was betrayed” in recounting the Last Supper tradition (I Cor 11.23). Because of the extensive knowledge Paul exhibits of the historical Jesus, despite his never having met Jesus, Paul’s letters have been aptly called a fifth Gospel. The authority of the Jesus tradition which he delivered is evident in his words, “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you” (I Cor 11.23). The great authority which the Jesus tradition possessed for Paul is evident in his carefully distinguishing between the words of Jesus transmitted to him and his own thoughts on matters about which the Jesus tradition was silent: “To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, … To the rest I say, not the Lord, … Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy” (7.10, 12, 25).

1.5.2.3 Luke’s Gospel

The OT prophets demanded the same authority for their written word as for their spoken word.48 A written record of the apostolically transmitted Jesus traditions would be almost immediately useful to the early church as it spread. If Luke–Acts was written, as seems probable, prior to AD 70,49 then we have very early reference to such records in the preface to the Gospel of Luke itself: “Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word” (Lk 1.1–2). Mark’s Gospel was most probably among these,

perhaps even Matthew.50 Luke did not apparently regard these narratives as being Scripture; but by the time I Timothy was written (usually dated after Paul's death), these Jesus traditions and perhaps even Luke–Acts itself was regarded as Scripture. For the author of the pastorals, enjoining that double honor be accorded to church elders engaged in preaching and teaching, provides as his justification, "for the scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages'" (I Tim 5.17–18). The first of these scriptural quotations comes from Dt 25.4 (LXX), but the second derives, not from the OT, but from Lk 10.7! The only other place where Paul quotes Jesus directly (I Cor 11.23–25) echoes the account of the Last Supper in Luke's Gospel. While one might try to peel off the second quotation as a non-scriptural addendum, leaving the reference to Scripture to Dt 25.4 alone, there is no reason to make such a differentiation,51 and we have early, extra-biblical examples of Jesus' words being cited as Scripture in Epistle of Barnabas 4.14: "as it is written, 'Many are called, but few are chosen'" (citing Mt 22.14) and II Clement 2.4: "Again another scripture says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'" (citing Mk 2.17). In any case, what is undeniable is that for the author of I Timothy the second citation is invested with the same authority as the OT. Marshall comments, "A written source is surely required, and one that would have been authoritative."52 That points to Luke's Gospel in some form. Moreover, if the author of the pastorals is not Paul himself, he seems to evince knowledge of Acts as well as the Gospel of Luke, for in II Tim 3.11 he refers to "what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me."53 Thus, by the time of the pastoral epistles, whatever their date, canonical Gospels were likely already being regarded as Scripture by the early church.54

1.5.2.4 Pauline Epistles

Moreover, at about the same time, the Pauline epistles were also being regarded as Scripture, as we see from II Pet 3.15–16: “So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.” The author is evidently aware of a collection of Pauline letters, one or some of which had been received by the churches to which II Peter is addressed. We can discern neither which Pauline letter(s) the addressees had received (though from II Pet 3.1; I Pet 1.1 good candidates would include Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians) nor which were included in the collection known to the author of II Peter (though even before Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea he had already written at least Galatians, I and II Corinthians, I and II Thessalonians, and Romans). Such a collection may well have circulated very early among the churches, additional letters’ being added later.55 Clement of Rome, writing in 95, knows of such a collection, citing Romans (I Clement 35.5–6 [Rom 1.29–32]) and I Corinthians (I Clement 37.5; 47.1–3; 49.5 [I Cor 12.12–26; 1.11–13; 13.4–7]) and alluding to II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians. On the basis of Clement’s knowledge of Pauline letters, such a collection must have been assembled no later than the 80s.56 By the time of the usual date assigned to II Peter toward the end of the first century there is no reason that all Paul’s extant letters could not have been included in the collection.

The author of II Peter puts Paul’s letters on a par with the OT Scriptures already mentioned in 1.20–21. Just as those Scriptures came by the instigation of the Holy Spirit, so Paul’s letters are said to have been written in accordance with the wisdom given to him by God.57 Bauckham comments that it would make “no sense” to take tas loipas graphas non-technically as merely writings: “the definite article requires us to give it its technical sense (as always in the NT) of ‘inspired, authoritative writings,’ i.e., scriptures.”58 The author of II Peter is not trying to establish a canon – there may well have been other apostolic writings besides Paul’s that counted as Scripture,59 –

but Paul's are mentioned here because the addressees had received at least one Pauline letter, which they evidently regarded as authoritative. "The inclusion of Paul's letters in this category certainly means they are regarded as inspired, authoritative writings (as v. 15 in fact says), ranked alongside the OT and probably various other books, including other apostolic writings."60

Davids comments that we shall likely never pin down when the barrier between "the Scriptures" and the newly produced writings of the Jesus movement (including the writings of Paul) was crossed. It was probably crossed at different times in different communities. Already during Paul's ministry, his letters were intended to be read in the Christian assemblies (I Thess 5.27; Col 4.16). Davids reflects:

If a community had been founded by Paul, they certainly believed that they had heard 'the word of the Lord' from him as he preached; he had been their source of truth and enlightenment, including their source of how to interpret the Jewish Scriptures. What would happen when such a community received a letter from Paul or a copy of a letter Paul had written to another community? Surely it would be valued from the start… . Would the letters from their founder not have been read alongside the Jewish Scriptures? We cannot document the 'when,' but under such circumstances it would not be at all surprising if such a community had not quickly mentioned Paul's writings (such as they had) and the Jewish writings (i.e., the Scriptures) in the same breath… . his subsequent death would have surely elevated the value of these writings since the living voice was not available. It is anyone's guess how soon that happened in any given community.61

But happen it did and, from the evidence of II Peter, fairly quickly.

If II Peter is non-Petrine and late first century in date, then it becomes almost undeniable that not only the Pauline letters but also the Gospels were accepted in the churches as Scriptures. For in II Pet 1.17–18 we have an unmistakable reference to the transfiguration narrative: "For when he received honor and glory from

God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” This evidence confirms what we have already seen from I Tim 5.17–18.62

While we cannot tell how early the Gospels and apostolic epistles were being regarded in the churches as authoritative Scripture, toward the end of the first century they evidently were so regarded.63 Thus, at a strikingly early date, the central books of the NT were being treated as Scripture on a par with the Jewish Scriptures. This is “about as close as he [the author of II Peter] could come to citing the authority of the NT in support of one's views today.”64

2 The Nature of Scriptural Inspiration

2.1 Plenary and Verbal

How, then, should we characterize scriptural inspiration? Implicit in what we have already said is that scriptural inspiration is understood to be both plenary and verbal in nature. “Plenary” and “verbal” indicate respectively the breadth and depth, as it were, of scriptural inspiration. With respect to plenary inspiration, since every or all Scripture is inspired by God (II Tim 3.16), it follows that not merely prophecy or direct divine discourse are God’s words but all of Scripture. Any book esteemed to be part of holy Scripture is ipso facto inspired from start to finish.

Moreover, as God-breathed, Scripture must be verbally inspired, that is to say, the very words of Scripture are God-breathed. Although it is

tempting to think that it is the propositional content of Scripture that is inspired, regardless of the language in which that content is expressed, a moment's reflection reveals that as a linguistic deposit, as graphē (II Tim 3.16), it must be the words of Scripture that are inspired.65 That need not imply that different words might not have been chosen by the human author that might have as effectively served the same end, but simply that those words that have been chosen are divinely inspired.

Moreover, verbal inspiration is implied in the NT authors' reliance for their teaching upon single words in their scriptural citations. The classic illustration is Paul's exegesis of Gen 17.8 in Galatians 3.16: "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many; but, referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' which is Christ." However misconceived Paul's exegesis may strike us, it clearly hinges upon a single word of OT Scripture. Similarly, when Paul asserts that "it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical (to psychikon)" (I Cor 15.46), he depends crucially upon Gen 2.7's use of the word psychē to characterize the first man. Or again, when Mt 2.15 cites Hos 11.1, "out of Egypt I called my son," as a prooftext for Jesus, his interpretation depends crucially upon the word "son." The fact that citations of or allusions to the OT frequently do not hang upon particular words and may even involve paraphrase does not subvert verbal inspiration, since in such cases the exact wording need not be appealed to in order to make the author's point.66 But in cases in which it does crucially depend upon individual words, we see the depth of scriptural inspiration.

Oddly enough, then, it is the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Scriptures which are inspired, not their various translations; hence, the extreme interest in the work of textual critics in establishing the original text, to which later translations are compared and by means of which they are constantly reassessed.67 The original text is the standard by which every translation is measured. The fact that NT writers most frequently cite the LXX rather than the Hebrew text no more compromises the doctrine of

verbal inspiration than does English speakers' citing the English translations they and their audiences understand.68 Even poor translations and paraphrases of the original text are not problematic if either version would serve to make the author's point. Difficulties would arise only in cases where the author's point hinged crucially upon the LXX translation in contradiction to the original.69

Some have taken verbal inspiration to imply that it is only the scriptural autographs, now lost, which were inspired. Now it does seem apparent that copyists' mistakes are not inspired, since they were not part of the God-breathed text but corruptions of it. For the same reason translations of the text are not inspired but are constantly revised. But the loss of the autographs does not imply the loss of God's Word. By distinguishing between types and tokens of literary works, we may affirm that any token of the same type is as inspired as the original.70 Two physical copies of Tolstoy's War and Peace, for example, are non-identical objects, and yet they can be said to embody the same novel, which is not to be identified with any one physical instance. So two tokens of the NT are equally inspired if their type is. After all, they are identical in their wording.

This raises the question whether types actually exist. Here various perspectives are permissible. A metaphysician who believes in abstract objects will affirm without reservation the reality of types of literary works, which are instantiated by different tokens. The existence of such abstract objects might seem to pose a challenge to the doctrine of divine aseity (to be discussed in the locus De Deo: Attributa Dei), but it must be kept in mind that some abstract objects, such as the Equator or the center of mass of the solar system, if they exist, exist contingently and so pose no challenge to God's existing uniquely a se. Many philosophers similarly affirm that literary works, musical compositions, and fictional characters are contingent abstract objects created by their authors and composers.71 Thus, the NT authors themselves created, not just the tokens, but the types of their literary productions. Alternatively, we could treat talk of types as merely a useful façon de parler and types as the objects of make believe or pretense. All that really exist are the tokens, in which case

duplicate tokens could be regarded as both inspired because they are perfectly similar verbally and so regarded by God as his Word to us. Thus, God's Word is not lost with the destruction of the autographs.

2.2 Affectiones of Inspired Scripture

In virtue of Scripture's divine inspiration Protestant scholastics, in defending their doctrine of sola Scriptura, ascribed certain affectiones (properties) to Scripture.72 Various lists of Scripture's defining properties were offered, but four were especially important in defending Scripture as the only infallible rule of faith and practice: Scripture's authority, sufficiency, clarity, and necessity.

The most fundamental of these properties is Scripture's authority. We have seen that Scripture testifies to its own authority in matters of faith and practice. It is important in this regard to keep in mind the distinction between Scripture's normative role in the formulation of Christian doctrine and the epistemic question of the justification of belief in what Scripture teaches. By conflating these questions theologians have sometimes been misled into asserting that Scripture is self-authenticating, when in fact what they mean, as a closer reading often makes clear, is that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth of Scripture.73 Scripture teaches that Scripture, as God's Word, is the authoritative norm for the formulation of Christian doctrine, but it is the Holy Spirit's witness to us that gives us knowledge that what Scripture teaches is true.

Scripture's authority as such was not and is not a matter of dispute between Protestants and Catholics.74 The "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" (Dei Verbum) of the second Vatican Council states that "the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation" (11). Rather the controversy has been over Scripture's sufficiency. The sufficiency

of Scripture implies its completeness concerning what we need to know for salvation, in particular, that it does not need to be augmented by church tradition in order for it to perform its function. Scripture's sufficiency does not imply that ecclesiastical tradition is unnecessary for the formulation and elaboration of Christian doctrine, but, as Bavinck explains, "only that it completely contains 'the articles of faith' (articuli fidei), 'the matters necessary to salvation.' … The question is whether the written word of God explicitly or implicitly contains everything we need to know for our salvation and therefore is 'the total and sufficient rule of faith and morals' or whether in addition we must assume the existence of still another principle of knowledge (principium cognoscendi)."75 Scripture's sufficiency in this sense is, as we have seen, also taught in Scripture, for it speaks of "the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (II Tim 3.15). By contrast Roman Catholic theologians initially insisted on the necessity and independence of Church tradition to supplement Scripture. The Council of Trent (4th session) declares that salvific truth is found in "written books and unwritten traditions" (in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus), a formulation which, though consistent with overdetermination, "both sides took to imply a material supplementing of the biblical statements."76 The first Vatican Council (session 3, ch. 2) similarly speaks of the revelation contained "in written books and in the unwritten traditions" that have come down to us. It is this traditional view that Bavinck described in these words: "The difference between Rome and the Reformation in their respective use of tradition consists in this: Rome wanted a tradition that ran on an independent parallel track alongside of Scripture or rather, Scripture alongside of tradition. The Reformation recognizes only a tradition that is founded on and flows from Scripture."77

In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, certain Roman Catholic theologians came to challenge the traditional Catholic interpretation, noting that the conciliar texts do not deny the sufficiency of Scripture for saving truth. In the "Dogmatic Constitution

on Divine Revelation" of the second Vatican Council we see the tension between traditionalists and revisionists. There is an emphasis on the "close connection and communication between sacred tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end" (9). For "sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing" by the apostles; "sacred tradition hands on in its full purity God's word" to the successors of the apostles. Thus, "these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known." The council later affirms that "all the preaching of the church must be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture" (21). Still, in one of the last additions to the text the council adds, "It is not from sacred Scripture alone that the church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed" (9). Then the formulation of Trent is repeated that "Both sacred tradition and sacred scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reference" (pari pietatis ac reverentia). This caveat, however, does not deny that tradition is ultimately rooted in Scripture but concerns our certainty about Scriptural teaching.

Stephen Davis observes:

> The older theory is no longer in vogue in Catholic theological circles (except for very conservative ones)… . Revisionists… do not subordinate Scripture to Tradition. The material insufficiency of Scripture is no longer affirmed; rather what is stressed is the unity of Scripture and Tradition… . What revisionists suggest instead is that either explicitly or by implication Scripture contains all revealed truth and that, materially, Scripture takes priority… . Accordingly, the role of Tradition is not to add new content to revelation, but rather to interpret Scripture.78

So, Pannenberg opines, "the opposition which faced the older Protestantism" with regard to Scripture and tradition "has lost its

edge today,”79 a major step in the direction of unity of Christian witness.

The need for authoritative interpretation of Scripture impinges upon the clarity of Scripture. As one might expect, the clarity of Scripture does not mean that Scripture contains no mysteries beyond human comprehension or that Scripture is clear in all its passages. As Bavinck explains:

It means only that the truth, the knowledge of which is necessary to everyone for salvation, though not spelled out with equal clarity on every page of Scripture, is nevertheless presented throughout all of Scripture in such a simple and intelligible form that a person concerned about the salvation of his or her soul can easily, by personal reading and study, learn to know that truth from Scripture without the assistance and guidance of the church and the priest.80

II Tim 3.15 alone once again makes this property an undeniable teaching of Scripture.

Vatican II also served to reduce the gap separating Protestants and Catholics with respect to the clarity of Scripture, for the “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation” emphasizes the importance of sound hermeneutical principles prior to church interpretation. “Since God speaks in sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words” (12). This will involve paying careful attention to the literary genre of scriptural passages and the historical context. “It is the task of exegetes to work according to these rules toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature.” Nevertheless, the interpretation of Scripture “is finally subject to the judgment of the Church.”

Pannenberg remarks that it is interesting to link the teaching of Dei Verbum 12 with two other statements: first, that the Church's teaching office does not stand over God's word but serves it (10) and, second, that Scripture is the Church's supreme rule of faith (21). "The implication is that the interpretation which the teaching office advances is tied to scripture's only meaning as we learn it from scholarly exegesis, and not to any expository authority. This undoubtedly brings the Roman Catholic view closer to the Reformation doctrine of the clarity of Scripture."81

Little needs to be said of the necessity of Scripture, for apart from divine revelation we should not know the plan of salvation disclosed to us in the sacred Scriptures. Paul speaks of the divine mystery "which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3.5). He says, "The gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1.11–12). The revisionist emphasis in the Roman Catholic communion on the unity of Scripture and tradition shows that Catholics would not envision an appeal to tradition alone apart from Scripture. It is the truth of Scripture which the church hands on. Thus, there is no daylight between Protestants and Catholics concerning Scripture's necessity.

2.3 Theories of Inspiration

The Scriptures, as God's written Word, have, since the time of the Church Fathers, often been compared to Christ the living Word as possessing two natures, divine and human. Although this analogy may not be entirely apt,82 it is convenient to consider Scripture as a divine-human product. Some have alleged that conceiving of Scripture as a divine-human product leads to an irresolvable conflict. In a standard handbook on systematic theology, for example, Stephen Fowl warns, "it really becomes impossible for the

Christological analogy of scripture's dual nature to hold. It would seem that at this particular point the divine and human natures of scripture simply cannot coexist."83 Is such a pessimistic verdict justified?

2.3.1 The Divinity of Scripture

On the basis of biblical texts like II Pet. 1.21 and II Tim. 3.16 Church Fathers from the earliest time unanimously regarded the Scriptures as "holy," "sacred," and "divine" and therefore as absolutely authoritative, being the very words of God himself.84 The Fathers did not engage in an extensive analysis of the means by which Scripture was inspired, but contented themselves with similes and analogies. Athenagoras seems to think of a sort of Spirit-possession akin to the Hellenistic model of the Sibylline oracles, the human spokesmen being mere instruments of the Spirit:

> I think that you … cannot be ignorant of the writings either of Moses or of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the other prophets, who, lifted in ecstasy above the natural operations of their minds by the impulses of the Divine Spirit, uttered the things with which they were inspired, the Spirit making use of them as a flute-player breathes into a flute… (Athenagoras Legatio pro Christianis 9).

Athenagoras is willing to grant that pagan poets and philosophers have "an affinity with the afflatus from God," but whereas they are moved by their own souls, "we have for witnesses of the things we apprehend and believe, prophets, men who have pronounced concerning God and the things of God, guided by the Spirit of God" (Legatio 7). Similarly, Athenagoras' contemporary Theophilus states that the Spirit of God "came down upon the prophets and through them spoke of the creation of the world and of all other things" (Ad Autolycum 2.10). Thus, "Moses…, or, rather, the Word of God by him as by an instrument, says, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'" (2.10). Like Athenagoras, Theophilus

considers this sufficient to set the “divine writing” apart from the works of the philosophers, writers, and poets, for while they all have “a mixture of error” in them, the prophets, possessed by the Holy Spirit of God, wrote what is accurate, harmonious, and “really true” (2.12, 22; 3.1).

The author of the pseudo-Justinian tractate Cohortatio ad Graecos also employed the simile of musical instruments to characterize the sacred writers:

For neither by nature nor by human conception is it possible for men to know things so great and divine, but by the gift which then descended from above upon the holy men, who had no need of rhetorical art, nor of uttering anything in a contentious or quarrelsome manner, but to present themselves pure to the energy of the Divine Spirit, in order that the divine plectrum itself, descending from heaven, and using righteous men as an instrument like a harp or lyre, might reveal to us the knowledge of things divine and heavenly (Pseudo-Justin Cohortatio ad Graecos 8).

The analogy of musical instruments is an interesting one. It might appear to depreciate the human role in the production of Scripture. However, it does, in fact, succeed in emphasizing both the divine and human aspects of Scripture, since the type of instrument selected by the musician will determine the character of the musical sounds produced by his playing.

Still, there is no denying that the analogy does reduce the role of the human spokesmen as free agents. For although Pseudo-Justin emphasizes the simple and artless diction of the prophets, nonetheless their role as human instruments is subsumed under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit; they “use with simplicity the words and expressions which offer themselves and declare to you whatever the Holy Ghost, who descended upon them, chose to teach through them…” (Cohortatio ad Graecos 35).

Hippolytus continues to employ the simile of the divine plectrum playing the human instruments, but there is no trace of the Athenagoran idea that the prophets' natural faculties have been transcended. Rather the indwelling Spirit is conceived to enlighten and empower their faculties to speak the truths revealed to them by God:

> For these fathers were furnished with the Spirit, and largely honored by the Word Himself; and just as it is with instruments of music, so had they the Word always, like the plectrum, in union with them, and when moved by Him the prophets announced what God willed. For they spake not of their own power (let there be no mistake as to that), neither did they declare what pleased themselves. But first of all they were endowed with wisdom by the Word, and then again were rightly instructed in the future by means of visions. And then, when thus themselves fully convinced, they spake those things which were revealed by God to them alone, and concealed from all others (De Christo et antichristo 2; cf. Hippolytus Contra haeresim Noeti 11).

Although the spokesmen are here compared to instruments, Hippolytus' conception of God's working through them is more personalistic than what such a comparison might at first seem to suggest.

Jerome and Augustine also employed a more personalistic model, styling inspiration along the lines of dictation. The Epistle to the Romans, Jerome says, was dictated by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul (Epistola 120.9). Since God is the author of Scripture, "every word, syllable, accent, and point is packed with meaning" (Jerome Commentariorum in epistolam ad Ephesios 2.3). Augustine had a similar conception of the composition of Scripture. Christ, he explains, stands in relation to his disciples as does the head to the body.

Therefore, when those disciples have written matters which He declared and spake to them, it ought not by any means to be said that He has written nothing Himself; since the truth is, that His members have accomplished only what they became acquainted with by the repeated statements of the Head. For all that He was minded to give for our perusal on the subject of His own doings and sayings, He commanded to be written by those disciples, whom He thus used as if they were His own hands. Whoever apprehends this correspondence of unity and this concordant service of the members, all in harmony of the discharge of diverse offices under the Head, will receive the account which he gets in the Gospel through the narratives constructed by the disciples, in the same kind of spirit in which he might look upon the actual hand of the Lord Himself, … were he to see it engaged in the act of writing (De consensu evangelistarum 1.35.34).

Here Scripture is understood to be the product of a concordance of human and divine agents, the human authors writing what Christ commanded them to, so that he is ultimately the author of what they wrote.

The view that God is the author of Scripture in all its breadth and depth and that it is therefore authoritative was the common prepossession of the Church Fathers. However the inspiration of Scripture was conceived to be brought about, the human authors of Scripture were regarded as instrumental causes only, doing what the Spirit moved them to do. Origen thus spoke for all the Fathers when he asserted, “the sacred books are not the compositions of men, but … they were composed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, agreeably to the will of the Father of all things through Jesus Christ” (De principiis 4.9).

Medieval theologians continued in the conviction of the Church Fathers. In his review of this period Sasse remarks, “during all these centuries no one doubted that the Bible in its entirety was God’s Word, that God was the principal author of the Scriptures, as their human authors had written under the inspiration of God the Holy

Spirit, and that, therefore, these books were free from errors and contradictions, even when this did not seem to be the case."85 Thus, for example, Thomas Aquinas affirms, "The Spirit is the principal author of sacred Scripture; and inspired man is the instrument" (Quaestiones quodlibetales 7.16). The Holy Spirit never utters what is false; therefore, nothing false can underlie even the literal sense of Scripture (Summa theologiae IIa–IIae. 172.5 ad 3; Ia.1.10 ad 3).

The Protestant Reformation brought a renewed emphasis on Scripture's authority. Committed as they were to the principle of sola Scriptura, the Protestant Reformers were naturally champions of the doctrine of biblical inspiration and authority. Thus, Luther affirmed that the entirety of the canonical Scriptures is God's inspired Word: "Thus, we attribute to the Holy Spirit all of Holy Scripture."86 Luther affirms that the very words of Scripture are divinely inspired. Thus, in defending the interpretation of Is 7.14 as a prophecy of the Virgin Birth, Luther asserts, "Even though an angel from heaven were to say that almah does not mean virgin, we should not believe it. For God the Holy Spirit speaks through St. Matthew and St. Luke; we can be sure that He understands Hebrew speech and expressions perfectly well."87 Even the trivialities in Scripture (the levicula) are inspired.88 In the era of Protestant scholasticism following the Reformation, the Lutheran theologians insisted forcefully on the inspiration of the very words of Scripture.89 For these Protestant scholastics, as for Aquinas, God is the causa efficiens principalis of Scripture; human authors are the causae instrumentales. They are compared to quills used by the Holy Spirit, who dictates each and every word they write. Inspiration involves not only an impulsus ad scribendum and a suggestio rerum from the Holy Spirit, but also a suggestio verborum as well. Now of course these divines were aware of the stylistic differences and peculiarities of the authors of Scripture, but these were explained as a sort of condescension on God's part whereby he accommodates himself to speak in the vocabulary and style appropriate to each respective author.

The Reformed Protestant tradition took an equally strong stand on the doctrine of inspiration. Calvin's favorite characterization of the

means by which Scripture was inspired is dictation.90 He calls the human authors “amanuenses” of the Holy Spirit; they are his “organs” and “instruments.”91 Paradoxically, Calvin combined with the dictation theory of inspiration the affirmation that the biblical authors wrote freely in their own styles:

> The Spirit of God, who had appointed the Evangelists to be his clerks, appears purposely to have regulated their style in such a manner, that they all wrote one and the same history, with the most perfect agreement, but in different ways. It was intended, that the truth of God should more clearly and strikingly appear, when it was manifest that his witnesses did not speak by a preconcerted plan, but that each of them separately, without paying any attention to another, wrote freely and honestly what the Holy Spirit dictated.92

Despite the affirmation of the authors’ freedom, the weight of the passage falls on the divine sovereignty which determined that four differing accounts should be dictated.

Like their Lutheran counterparts, the Reformed scholastic theologians emphasized the inspiration and authority of Scripture. According to T. R. Phillips, “That God is the author of all Scripture; and thus inspired not only the substance but even the words, was unquestioned within seventeenth-century Reformed scholasticism.”93 Reformed theologians, while continuing to employ terms like “dictation” and “amanuenses” when explicating the means of inspiration, did not, according to Phillips, intend such terms to be taken literally, since they conceived of inspiration as a habitus or charism, a special divine gift of knowledge and volition which inwardly supplies the human author with the capacities for carrying out God’s mandate to write. Reformed thinkers differed among themselves as to whether the process of inspiration involved a suggestio verborum to the scriptural authors, but all were one in the belief that the extent of inspiration in the final product included the very words of Scripture.

For their part, Roman Catholic theologians of the Counter-Reformation also insisted on the inspiration and authority of Scripture. In the fourth session of the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church declared that the OT and NT have God as their author, having been dictated by the Holy Spirit (a Spiritu Sancto dictatas).[94] Protestants and Catholics alike were thus united in seeing God as the author of Scripture who employed human scribes to write down what he by his Spirit dictated. In so doing, they were reaffirming what the Christian Church had always believed and taught.

2.3.2 The Humanity of Scripture

Although Christian theologians have always recognized the idiosyncrasies of the human authors of Scripture, the role of human agents in the writing of Scripture was undeniably minimalized. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, rumblings of discontent with the classical doctrine of inspiration began to be heard among Catholic theologians. With Benedict de Spinoza's publication of his Tractatus theologico-politicus in 1670 these misgivings broke into public view. In addition to denying Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Spinoza attacked the doctrine of inspiration, which he understood to affirm that the human authors of Scripture were inspired by God to record divinely revealed truths. The prophets, he observes, were only inspired when speaking directly the words of God; when they spoke in ordinary conversation as private individuals, their words were not inspired. Although the apostles were prophets, it is evident when we read their writings that they were not speaking as inspired prophets in those writings. For their style of writing and their use of argumentation is incompatible with direct revelatory utterances:

> Now if we examine the style of the Epistles, we shall find it to be entirely different from that of prophecy. It was the constant practice of

the prophets to declare at all points that they were speaking at God's command, as in the phrases, 'Thus saith the Lord,' 'The Lord of hosts saith,' 'The commandment of the Lord,' and so on… . But in the Epistles of the Apostles we find nothing like this; on the contrary, in I Corinthians 7 v. 40 Paul speaks according to his own opinion. Indeed, there are numerous instances of expressions far removed from the authoritativeness of prophecy….

Furthermore, if we examine the manner in which the Apostles expound the Gospel in their Epistles, we see that this, too, is markedly different from that of the prophets. For the Apostles everywhere employ argument, so that they seem to be conducting a discussion rather than prophesying….

Therefore the modes of expression and discussion employed by the Apostles in the Epistles clearly show that these originated not from revelation and God's command but from their own natural faculty of judgment… .95

By associating inspiration with only revelatory, prophetic utterances, Spinoza undercuts the inspiration of the non-prophetic portions of Scripture, including the bulk of the NT. Far from being dictated by the Holy Spirit, "the Epistles of the Apostles were dictated solely by the natural light… ."96 The Gospels fare no better:

There are four Evangelists in the New Testament; and who can believe that God willed to tell the story of Christ and impart it in writing to mankind four times over? … Each Evangelist preached his message in a different place, and each wrote down in simple style what he had preached with the view to telling clearly the story of Christ, and not with a view to explaining the other Evangelists. If a comparison of their different versions sometimes produces a readier and clearer understanding, this is a matter of chance, and it occurs only in a few passages… .97

Scripture is called the "Word of God" only in virtue of its prophetic passages, and God is understood to be the author of the Bible only

because “true religion” is taught therein.98

Spinoza’s Tractatus sparked an eruption of controversy throughout Europe. In effect Spinoza was insisting that one must take seriously the humanity of Scripture and argued that doing so is incompatible with the traditional doctrine of inspiration. There was no denying the human element in Scripture to which Spinoza had drawn attention; the question was whether his inference followed that inspiration must therefore be circumscribed to direct prophecy. The Dutch theologian Jean Le Clerc, shaken by Spinoza’s critique, advocated abandonment of the doctrine of plenary inspiration, while insisting on the general reliability of the non-inspired portions of the Bible. Le Clerc distinguishes prophecies, histories, and doctrines within Scripture. The doctrines taught by Christ and the apostles he takes to be divinely inspired. But he claimed that even prophecies need not be inspired. For example, a prophet may report visions or voices from God by giving back in his own words the sense of what he heard or saw. The fact that the various prophets differ in their style of writing disproves the dictation theory of inspiration. In the same way with respect to histories: since the Evangelists differ in precise wording of Jesus’ teaching, they are merely giving back the sense of what Jesus said, for which task they needed only good memory and honesty, not divine inspiration. Citing Lk 1.1–4 Le Clerc comments, “You may observe in these words a Confirmation of what I have been saying, and a full Proof that St. Luke learn’d not that which he told us by Inspiration, but by Information from those who knew it exactly.”99 Le Clerc maintains that his position does not undermine Scripture’s authority because we are rationally obliged on the basis of the evidence to believe that the historical narratives of the NT are substantially true. Thus, in response to Spinoza he grants “that the Sacred Pen-Men were not inspired, neither as to the Stile, nor as to those things which they might know otherwise than by revelation,” but insists “that the Authority of the Scriptures ought not for all that to be esteemed less considerable.”100

Richard Simon, an early French biblical critic, attacked Le Clerc’s concessions to Spinoza in his Réponse au Livre intitulé Sentimens

de quelques Theologiens de Hollande and in his epochal Histoire Critique du Texte du Nouveau Testament.101 The central presupposition of Spinoza and Le Clerc attacked by Simon is their assumption that biblical inspiration is to be understood woodenly in terms of dictation: “Il n’est pas necessaire qu’un Livre pour être inspiré ait été dicté de Dieu mot pour mot.”102 Instead, Simon proposes to understand inspiration in terms of God’s direction of the authors of Scripture. Elsewhere he explains:

Immediate revelation takes place when the Holy Spirit reveals to a sacred author what he writes in such a way that this author does nothing but receive and give us what the Holy Spirit has dictated to him. It is thus that the prophets were inspired concerning things of the future, which they learned directly from God. This inspiration can also extend to words, should it happen that the Holy Spirit suggests to a writer the words he uses.

One speaks of special direction when the Holy Spirit does not reveal directly to an author what he puts into writing, but when he stirs him to write simply what he already knew, having learned it before, or understood it through his own perception. The Spirit assists and directs him in such a way that he will choose nothing that will not conform to the truth and the purpose for which the Sacred Books were composed, to know how to edify us in faith and charity. It is for that reason that Luke wrote in the Acts several incidents which he heard from the Apostles, and from those who were witnesses to them, as the preaching and miracles of St. Peter; or those he saw himself, as the arrival of St. Paul at Malta. It was not absolutely necessary that the facts he knew by himself be revealed to him.103

In Simon’s view, Spinoza and Le Clerc’s objections are predicated on a false understanding of the nature of inspiration, which they took to exclude human reasoning. But if inspiration is understood in terms of direction, not dictation, then there is no incompatibility between inspiration and the human phenomena noted by Spinoza. The Evangelists, for example, were not divested of memory and reason

when composing the Gospels, but they were assisted by God in such a way as to prevent them from falling into error. Simon writes:

> God has guided their pen in such a way that they do not fall into error. It is men who write; and the Spirit who directs them has not robbed them of their reason or their memory in order to inspire in them facts which they know perfectly well. But He has in general determined them to write instead of certain facts rather than others which they know equally well.104

Simon thus denies that "the Evangelists were sheer instruments of the Holy Spirit, who dictated to them word for word what they wrote."105

Le Clerc responded to Simon's critique by falling back to a more modest position: "My argument proves not directly that there was no Inspiration on these occasions, but only that there was nothing in the thing itself to induce us to believe that there was any… ."106 Le Clerc in effect shifts from the doctrinal question to the question of the epistemic justification of the doctrine. As for Simon's idea of inspiration as direction or guidance, Le Clerc finds this unobjectionable so long as the direction extends no further than the selection of the subject matter. With respect to Simon's contention that divine inspiration and human reasoning are not mutually exclusive, Le Clerc maintains that either the Holy Spirit gave the apostles fully framed arguments or only general principles. If he gave complete arguments, then there was no need for the author's reasoning. But if he gave only general principles, then the apostles were still dependent on fallible reasoning to make their deductions, and nothing has been gained.

In his counter-response to Le Clerc Simon defended the plenary inspiration of Scripture on the basis of II Tim 3.16.107 But he agrees that inspiration does not extend to the words of Scripture: "it is not at all necessary to extend it to the words or to the style of each sacred author; it is enough that the substance be inspired."108 There is no need to fear that the apostles' use of fallible reasoning renders their

writings errant, for God's direction will prevent this. "The Holy Spirit guided them in such a way that they never made a mistake in what they have written; but one need not therefore believe that there is nothing in their expressions other than the divine and supernatural."109 As we shall later see, whether Simon meant to deny verbal inspiration will depend upon some very subtle issues arising out of the tradition of Jesuit theology in which Simon stood.

These seventeenth century debates over the nature of biblical inspiration awakened the Church to the human side of Scripture. It now seemed altogether implausible to suppose that the means of biblical inspiration was divine dictation to human authors. The authors' variety of styles, their divergence in narrating identical events, their evident effort in gathering information, their trivial remarks and grammatical mistakes all seemed to point to a more important role for them to play than that of mere scribes. Thus, free human agency had to be an essential element of any adequate doctrine of biblical inspiration. Together with the Church's historic commitment to the full breadth and depth of biblical inspiration, the element of human agency implies, in Pinnock's words, that "Divine inspiration is plenary, verbal, and confluent."110 By plenary inspiration one means that all of Scripture, not just portions of it, is inspired. Along with the great doctrines, even the levicula are God's Word. This does not imply that all parts of Scripture are equally important or equally relevant at various times and places, but that all of it is God-breathed. By verbal inspiration one means that the very words of Scripture are inspired. The Bible, as a linguistic deposit, is God's Word. Hence, not merely the thoughts expressed, but the very language of Scripture is God-breathed. Finally, by confluent inspiration one means that Scripture is the product of dual authorship, human and divine. The human authors wrote freely and spontaneously, and yet God somehow was also at work to produce his Word through them. Hence, the writers of Scripture were not mere stenographers, but real authors, whose individuality shines through in their works. At the same time, God is the author of

Scripture, so that it can truly be affirmed, “The Holy Spirit said by David …,” thereby guaranteeing Scripture’s authority.

2.4 The Apparent Incoherence of Plenary, Verbal, Confluent Inspiration

2.4.1 The Problem

The problem is that the above properties of inspiration seem to constitute an inconsistent triad. John Cardinal Newman wrestled aloud with the tension they present:

> In what way inspiration is compatible with that personal agency on the part of its instruments, which the composition of the Bible evidences, we know not; but if any thing is certain, it is this, – that, though the Bible is inspired, and therefore, in one sense, written by God, yet very large portions of it, if not far the greater part of it, are written in as free and unconstrained a manner, and (apparently) with as little consciousness of a supernatural dictation or restraint, on the part of His earthly instruments, as if He had had no share in the work. As God rules the will, yet the will is free, – as He rules the course of the world, yet men conduct it, – so He has inspired the Bible, yet men have written it. Whatever else is true about it, this is true, – that we may speak of the history, or mode of its composition, as truly as of that of other books; we may speak of its writers having an object in view, being influenced by circumstances, being anxious, taking pains, purposely omitting or introducing things, supplying what others had left, or leaving things incomplete. Though the Bible be inspired, it has all such characteristics as might attach to a book uninspired, – the characteristics of dialect and style, the distinct effects of times and places, youth and age, or moral and intellectual character; and I insist on this, lest in what I am going to say, I seem

to forget (what I do not forget), that in spite of its human form, it has in it the spirit and the mind of God.111

One will look in vain among the classical defenders of plenary, verbal inspiration for a resolution of this difficulty. Of the Lutheran dogmaticians, Robert Preus confesses frankly:

The Lutheran doctrine of inspiration presents a paradox. On the one hand it was taught that God is the auctor primaries of Scripture, that He determined and provided the thoughts and actual words of Scripture and that no human cooperation concurred efficienter in producing Scripture. On the other hand it was maintained that the temperaments (ingenia), the research and feelings (studia), and the differences in background (Nationes) of the inspired writers are all clearly reflected in the Scriptures; that there is nothing docetic about Scripture; that God's spokesmen wrote willingly, consciously, spontaneously, and from the deepest personal spiritual conviction and experience; that psychologically and subjectively (materialiter et subjective) they were totally involved in the writing of Scripture. These two salient features of the doctrine of inspiration must be held in tension….

Now it may seem utterly inconsistent that the Spirit of God could in one and the same action provide the very words of Scripture and accommodate Himself to the linguistic peculiarities and total personality of the individual writer so that these men wrote freely and spontaneously. But this is precisely what took place according to the Biblical evidence and data. And if Scripture does not inform us how both of these facts can be true, we must not do violence to either or try to probe the mystery of inspiration beyond what has been revealed. The Lutheran teachers are well aware that there is a lacuna in their theology at this point … ; and they are content to retain this logical gap and accept the paradox.112

We should not sell the doctrine of accommodation short. After all, in choosing to inspire the biblical books at all, God has already accommodated himself to speaking in the languages of Hebrew and

Greek and has thus limited his expression to what the grammar and vocabulary of those languages permit. Having stooped so low, is it incredible that he should also take account of the further limitations and idiosyncrasies of each individual author, so that through one he speaks in the language of a shepherd, through another in the language of a civil servant, and so on? To achieve truly idiomatic speech, perhaps God even deigns to speak ungrammatically on occasion. Perhaps, as Aquinas believed, God's instruction might be so subtle and mysterious that the human mind could be subjected to it without a person's knowing it, so that one is unable to discern whether his thoughts are produced by the divine instinct or by one's own spirit.113 Whether accommodation plausibly explains the levicula in Scripture is more doubtful. But the salient point is that accommodation still falls short of confluence: if the author's thoughts and sentences are the product of either the divine instinct or his own spirit, rather than both, then Scripture is not the product of dual authorship. On the theory of accommodation, there is then one author of Scripture, God, and one stenographer, man, to whom God dictates Scripture in a vernacular that makes it indistinguishable from the writer's own expression. Inspiration is not confluent. How inspiration can be confluent as well verbal and plenary is admitted to be a paradox.

Nor will we find much help from the Reformed divines. B. B. Warfield of the old Princeton school maintains that the classical doctrine of inspiration "purposely declares nothing as to the mode of inspiration. The Reformed Churches admit that this is inscrutable. They content themselves with defining carefully and holding fast the effects of the divine influence, leaving the mode of divine action by which it is brought about draped in mystery."114 But what about Calvin's heavy use of the notion of dictation with respect to Scripture's inspiration? Warfield admits that Calvin "is somewhat addicted to the use of language which, strictly taken, would imply that the mode of their gift was 'dictation.'"115 But he contends that "dictation" refers to the result or the effect of inspiration, not to its mode. The Scriptures have, in virtue of their inspiration, the quality of a dictation from God;

but they were not dictated by God. “It is by no means to be imagined,” declares Warfield, that the classical doctrine of inspiration “is meant to proclaim a mechanical theory of inspiration. The Reformed Churches have never held such a theory: though dishonest, careless, ignorant or overeager controverters of its doctrine have often brought the charge.”116

The claim that Calvin’s notion of dictation is not “mechanical” is frequently made by Reformed thinkers. Taken literally, mechanical dictation would be dictation involving only one agent, the speaker, such as would take place when one utilizes a machine to record one’s words. Non-mechanical dictation would then involve two agents, not only a speaker but also a secretary, who freely writes down the speaker’s words and perhaps concurs with what the speaker is saying. Unfortunately, this sort of non-mechanical dictation is still insufficient for true confluence because while the secretary exercises freedom in agreeing to write or not, he exercises no freedom at all with respect to content or style: the words are not truly his. As Warfield rightly emphasized, “the gift of Scripture through its human authors took place by a process much more intimate than can be expressed by the term ‘dictation’… .”117

Kenneth Kantzer believes that such an intimate process may be found in Calvin’s own conception of inspiration:

In ordinary dictation … the secretary is active only to recognize and to copy words originating outside the mind of the secretary. This sort of dictation is by no means consistent with Calvin’s view of the method of inspiration. As he interprets the facts, the sacred authors are active with their minds and whole personalities in the selection both of ideas and words. Scripture really originates in the mind of God, who is its ultimate author in the sense that He controls the mind and personality of the men He has chosen to write Scripture. By this means, God inspires the writers of Scripture (better breathes out through them as instruments) to speak to man exactly His chosen words as He wills. When, in Calvin’s thought, the prophet is referred

to as an instrument, he is by no means an instrument which simply passes on words mechanically given to him. Rather, because of God's sovereign control of his being, he is an instrument whose whole personality expresses itself naturally to write exactly the words God wishes to speak. Only in this large and comprehensive sense are the words of Scripture dictated by God.118

The difficulty of Kantzer's account is that while it seems to express the desideratum of confluence, it does not explain how this is achieved. How is it that God "sovereignly controls the mind and personality" of a biblical author so that his "whole personality expresses itself naturally to write exactly the words God wishes to speak"? Given Calvin's strong views on divine providence, the answer would seem to be that a very rigid determinism is in place whereby God, through the use of all causes under his control, shapes the biblical author like clay in such a way that he writes what God has pre-determined. But this is worse than secretarial dictation; it is, in fact, strict mechanical dictation, for man has been reduced to the level of a machine. God's causally determining Paul to write his Epistle to the Romans is incompatible with Paul's freely writing that epistle on any libertarian (and I should say, plausible) account of freedom.119 Absent libertarian human freedom, we are not only back to mechanical dictation, but also to mere accommodation as the ultimate account of the humanity of Scripture, since God is the only agent who determines what an author shall write. Genuine confluence, then, requires libertarian human freedom, such that there are at least two authors of any book of Scripture. That inspiration is plenary prevents confluence's being understood as the divine and human author's each writing different portions of Scripture; that inspiration is verbal precludes confluence's being interpreted to mean that God is the author of the ideas and a man the author of the words. The whole of Scripture, down to its very words, is the freely written word of both God and man. How can this be?

The tension in the classical doctrine of inspiration has in our own day been more precisely formulated by philosophical theologians Randall

and David Basinger.120 They are concerned to show that the evangelical affirmation of biblical authority and inerrancy is inseparably wedded to the dictation theory of inspiration. If God alone were the author of Scripture, its inerrancy would be unproblematic; but given that the human authors write freely, how can God guarantee that they write what he desires? The defender of the classical doctrine of inspiration must argue along the following lines:

The words of the Bible are the product of free human activity.

Human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom.

God totally controlled what human authors did in fact write.

Therefore, the words of the Bible are God's utterances.

Whatever God utters is errorless.

Therefore, the words of the Bible are errorless.

This argument is as much an argument for the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture on the assumption of confluence as it is an argument for inerrancy. We may therefore leave aside for now the latter notion.

The key premise in the argument is (2). Detractors of plenary, verbal inspiration will regard (2) as incoherent. The only way God could have totally controlled (an expression Basinger and Basinger take to be synonymous with "infallibly guaranteed") what the human authors wrote would have been to take away their freedom. The defender of classical inspiration, on the other hand, must affirm (2) if he is not to fall into a dictation theory of inspiration. Although Basinger and Basinger go on to argue that the defender of classical inspiration cannot, in view of his endorsement of (2), utilize the Free Will Defense with respect to the problem of evil, I think that the price of "placing direct responsibility on God for each instance of moral evil in

the world”121 is so great that their appeal to the problem of evil is more perspicuously understood in terms of evil’s constituting evidence against (2).

Given the reality of human evil and the fact that God cannot be the author of evil, (2) must be false. Accordingly, one can then argue:

1. The words of the Bible are the product of free human activity.

2′. Human activities (and their products) cannot be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom.

7. The doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible entails God’s total control of the words of the Bible.

8. Therefore, the doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible is false.

If one persists in affirming the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration, then, since (7) is true virtually by definition, one must deny (1); that is to say, verbal, plenary inspiration implies dictation. The bottom line is that the doctrine of the plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration of Scripture is incoherent.122

The response to Basinger and Basinger by defenders of classical inspiration has not been encouraging. NT scholar D. A. Carson agrees that their argument “is valid,”123 by which he evidently means “sound,” since he does not dispute the truth of their premises. Carson agrees that the classical doctrine of inspiration is incompatible with the Free Will Defense. But he does not see this as in any way problematic. On the one hand, the notion of divine/human confluent activity lies at the very heart of the Christian faith, since the major redemptive acts of history were wrought by both God and man:

… the conspirators did what God Himself decided beforehand should happen. Yet the conspirators are not thereby excused: they are still regarded as guilty. Any other view will either depreciate the heinousness of the sin or render the Cross a last minute arrangement by which God cleverly snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat, rather than the heart of His redemptive purposes.124

If we permit divine human concursus in redemptive history, Carson asks, why not also in biblical inspiration? This line of response seems to indicate that Carson would accept (2) and reject the Free Will Defense. In fact, he does go on to dismiss that defense; but he does so in such a way as to call into question his commitment to (2). For he says, “human responsibility can be grounded in something other than ‘free will,’ where free will is understood to entail absolute power to the contrary” and footnotes Jonathan Edwards and other defenders of a compatibilist view of freedom.125 But if one is a compatibilist about human freedom, then (wholly apart from the difficulties this occasions for theodicy) the sort of freedom envisioned in (1) seems inadequate to secure confluence. One has advanced no further than a deterministic doctrine of providence which turns the authors of Scripture into robots. One has not lived up to the charge of Carson’s co-editor John Woodbridge that “We must spell out unequivocally our full commitment to the human authorship and full freedom of the biblical writers as human authors,”126 nor have we stayed true to what Carson himself calls “the central line of evangelical thought… : God in His sovereignty… super-intended the freely composed human writings we call the Scriptures.”127 Rather we have simply watered down the concept of freedom so as to be able to affirm determinism and, hence, God’s total control.

Norman Geisler, on the other hand, argues that the Basingers’ argument is not sound.128 Unfortunately, his critique is not as clear as it could be, and the Basingers are able to point out a number of misunderstandings in their reply to Geisler.129 These misunderstandings notwithstanding, there are a couple of points in Geisler’s critique to which Basinger and Basinger have not given due attention. First, Geisler, in effect, challenges (3). He observes that a

purely human utterance may be inerrant; if, then, a true statement is made by both God and man, God need not totally control the human author in order for the statement to be without error. By extension all the statements of Scripture could be errorless and have both God and human beings as their authors, yet without God's exercising total control over what the human authors wrote. If (3) is false, then the defender of biblical inerrancy does not assume (2) in defense of his doctrine; rather he defends his position on the basis of (4–6) alone. Now Geisler is obviously correct that total divine control of human authors is not a necessary condition of the inerrancy of their writings. Nonetheless, given plenary, verbal inspiration, the denial of (3) is so improbable that (3) is doubtlessly true. Otherwise we should be forced to say that the biblical authors of their own free will just happened to write exactly the sentences which God wanted as his own utterances. In any case, if what is at stake here is not so much inerrancy as plenary, verbal inspiration, then (7) tells us that the truth of that doctrine entails (3). For God and man did not merely concur in tokening separately the same Scriptural sentence-types; rather the doctrine of inspiration holds that the human author's sentence-tokens are identical with God's sentence-tokens; God tokens the sentences through the human author; his words are God's words. Thus, God must in some way so control the author as to speak through him. The control is "total" in that it extends to the very words of Scripture. Hence, Geisler's first objection fails to show why the defender of inspiration is not committed to (3) and, if he wishes to avoid dictation, therefore (2).

But Geisler has a second line of attack.130 He exposes a hidden assumption in Basinger and Basinger's reasoning, to wit,

9. If God can infallibly guarantee what some men will do, then he can do the same for all,

an assumption which Geisler rejects as false. Geisler is quite correct that the Basingers make this assumption, for (2) may be taken in the

sense of either

2*. Some human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom,

or

2**. All human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom.

The Basingers require (2**) for their argument to be sound. But one could maintain that while it is within God's power to control the writing of Scripture without violating human freedom, that does not imply that God can so control human activity in general that no one ever freely does evil.131 In order for the classical doctrine of inspiration to be incompatible with the Free Will Defense, (2) must be taken as universally quantified rather than as existentially quantified. But now a familiar move in the Free Will Defense may be turned against Basinger and Basinger: (2), so understood, is neither necessary nor essential to Christian theism nor a logical consequence of propositions that are; nor is the person who fails to see that (2) has these qualities intellectually deficient in some way.132 Therefore, no incompatibility has been demonstrated between the classical doctrine of inspiration and the Free Will Defense.

Basinger and Basinger's reply at this point is faltering:

Geisler … denies that people who believe that God infallibly guaranteed that the writers of Scripture freely produced an inerrant work must also believe that God can infallibly guarantee that all individuals will always freely do what he wants….

But is this true? Can God infallibly guarantee that any single human action will freely occur if he cannot totally control all free human action…? We believe not… . if ([2]) is false, then God can never guarantee that any human will freely do what he wants.133

But this reply amounts to nothing but a personal confession of disbelief on the part of the Basingers. It needs to be remembered that Basinger and Basinger are making the very strong claim that "Any person wanting to both use the free will defense in his theodicy and, at the same time, defend inerrancy against dictation is attempting the impossible… . One cannot have it both ways."134 In order to show these doctrines to be broadly logically incompatible, they must come up with a proposition which meets the above stipulated conditions and whose conjunction with the propositions formulating each doctrine is logically inconsistent, and (2) is definitely not it.

2.4.2 The Solution: A Molinist Theory of Inspiration

But where does this leave us? I suggested that Basinger and Basinger's argument might be more perspicaciously understood as claiming that human evil constitutes evidence against (2). That is to say, given (2*) with respect to scriptural inspiration, (2**) is highly probable. For if God can control human activities in such exquisite detail as to produce through free agents a Scripture which is verbally and plenarily inspired, then there seems no reason why he could not control human activities such that people always freely refrain from sin. Given, then, the evil in the world, (2′) is probably true. But if (2′) is probably true, then, as argued, the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration is probably false.

To defeat this argument what is needed is some plausible, positive account of how God can control free human activities in such a way as to yield inspired Scripture without being able simultaneously to

control free human activities in such a way as to prevent evil. Here Geisler is less helpful. He suggests:

> The way God 'can' guarantee that some do not perform evil (or err) is by knowing infallibly that they will freely do good. It does not follow that God can do this for those who freely choose to do evil. For in this case God would have to force them to do contrary to their free choice.135

On Geisler's view, "since God knows (and so determines) which men will utter truth and when, then God can also affirm these truths as his infallibly true Word."136 There are two problems with this suggestion:137 (1) It appears to endorse an untenable theological fatalism springing from the fact of divine foreknowledge. The suggestion seems to be that future acts, whether good or bad, are somehow fixed in virtue of God's infallible foreknowledge of them. But as numerous thinkers have shown, such an inference is simply logically fallacious.138 Since God's foreknowledge is counterfactually dependent upon future contingents, such events can fail to happen until they do happen; but were they to fail to happen, then God would have foreknown differently than he does. (2) Divine foreknowledge is insufficient for providential control of the authors of Scripture.139 Simple foreknowledge informs God only of what the authors of Scripture will freely write; but such knowledge comes too late in the order of explanation for God to do anything about it. The problem is not that God would have to "force them to do contrary to their free choice." Rather the problem is that it is logically impossible to change the future. Geisler, in effect, incorrectly places the divine creative decree in the order of explanation after divine foreknowledge, rather than before. Thus on his view God must consider himself extraordinarily lucky that he finds himself in a world in which the writers of Scripture just happen to freely respond to their circumstances (including the promptings of his Spirit) in just the right ways so as to produce the Bible. This is incompatible with a robust view of divine providence.

Geisler does, however, hint at the account we are looking for. In asking why some men were providentially preserved from error while others were not kept from error (or evil) at every time, he suggests:

> It may have been because only some men freely chose to co-operate with the Spirit so that he could guide them in an errorless way. Or it may have been that the Holy Spirit simply chose to use those men and occasions which he infallibly knew would not produce error.140

Here we are speaking not of simple foreknowledge, but of God's knowledge of subjunctive conditionals or counterfactuals. It involves his knowledge of what some creature would freely do, were that person to be placed in a specific set of circumstances. If God has such knowledge explanatorily prior to his creative decree, then such knowledge is what theologians have called middle knowledge (scientia media).141

> Largely the product of the creative genius of the Spanish Jesuit of the Counter-Reformation Luis Molina (1535–1600), the doctrine of middle knowledge proposes to furnish an analysis of divine knowledge in terms of three logical moments.142 Although whatever God knows, he has known from eternity, so that there is no temporal succession in God's knowledge, nonetheless there does exist a sort of logical succession in God's knowledge in that his knowledge of certain propositions is conditionally or explanatorily prior to his knowledge of certain other propositions. That is to say, God's knowledge of a particular set of propositions depends asymmetrically on his knowledge of a certain other set of propositions and is in this sense posterior to it. In the first, unconditioned moment God knows all possibilia, not only all individual essences, but also all possible worlds. Molina calls such knowledge "natural knowledge" because the content of such knowledge is essential to God and in no way depends on the free decisions of his will. By means of his natural knowledge, then, God has knowledge of every contingent state of affairs which could possibly obtain and of what the instantiation of

the individual essence of any free creature could freely choose to do in any such state of affairs that should be actual.

In the second moment, God possesses knowledge of all true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. That is to say, whereas by his natural knowledge God knew what any free creature could do in any set of circumstances, now in this second moment God knows what any free creature would do in any set of circumstances. This is not because the circumstances causally determine the creature's choice, but simply because this is how the creature would freely choose. God thus knows that were he to actualize certain states of affairs, then certain other contingent states of affairs would obtain. Molina calls this counterfactual knowledge "middle knowledge" because it stands in between the first and third moment in divine knowledge. Middle knowledge is like natural knowledge in that such knowledge does not depend on any decision of the divine will; God does not determine which counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are true or false. Thus, if it is true that

If some agent S were placed in circumstances C, then he would freely perform action a,

then even God in his omnipotence cannot bring it about that S would freely refrain from a if he were placed in C. On the other hand, middle knowledge is unlike natural knowledge in that the content of his middle knowledge is not essential to God. True counterfactuals of freedom are contingently true; S could freely decide to refrain from a in C, so that different counterfactuals could be true and be known by God than those that are. Hence, although it is essential to God that he have middle knowledge, it is not essential to him to have middle knowledge of those particular propositions that he does in fact know.

Intervening between the second and third moments of divine knowledge stands God's free decree to actualize a world known by him on the basis of his middle knowledge to be realizable. By his natural knowledge, God knows what is the entire range of logically possible worlds; by his middle knowledge he knows, in effect, what is

the proper subset of those worlds which it is feasible for him to actualize. By a free decision, God decrees to actualize one of those worlds known to him through his middle knowledge. According to Molina, this decision is the result of a complete and unlimited deliberation by means of which God considers and weighs every possible circumstance and its ramifications and decides to settle on the particular world he desires. Hence, logically prior, if not chronologically prior, to God's creation of the world is the divine choice concerning which world to actualize.

Given God's free decision to actualize a world, in the third and final moment God possesses knowledge of all remaining propositions that are in fact true in the actual world. Such knowledge is denominated "free knowledge" by Molina because it is logically posterior to the decision of the divine will to actualize a world. The content of such knowledge is clearly not essential to God, since he could have decreed to actualize a different world. Had he done so, the content of his free knowledge would be different.

Molina's doctrine has profound implications for divine providence. For it enables God to exercise providential control of free creatures without abridging the free exercise of their wills. In virtue of his knowledge of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom and his freedom to decree that certain circumstances exist and certain free creatures be placed in those circumstances, God is able to bring about indirectly that events occur which he knew would happen as a direct result of the particular decisions which those creatures would freely make in those circumstances.

Plantinga has provided an analysis of such providential control in terms of what he calls strong and weak actualization.143 God is said to strongly actualize a state of affairs S if and only if he causes S to be actual and also causes to be actual every contingent state of affairs S* included in S (where S includes S* if and only if it is impossible that S be actual and S* not be actual). God is said to weakly actualize a state of affairs S if and only if he strongly actualizes a state of affairs S* that counterfactually implies S (that is,

were S* to obtain, then S would obtain). Then God can weakly actualize any state of affairs S if and only if there is a state of affairs S* such that (i) it is within God's power to strongly actualize S*, and (ii) if God were to strongly actualize S*, then S would be actual. Weak actualization is clearly compatible with human freedom, since the actualized state of affairs S obtains in virtue of the counterfactual of creaturely freedom which connects S to S*. Thus, God knew, for example, that were he to create the apostle Paul in just the circumstances he was in around AD 55, he would freely write to the Corinthian church, saying just what he did in fact say. It needs to be emphasized that those circumstances included not only Paul's background, personality, environment, and so forth, but also any promptings or gifts of the Holy Spirit to which God knew Paul would freely respond.

The theological application to the doctrine of inspiration is obvious. By weakly actualizing the composition of the books of the Bible, God can bring it about that scriptural inspiration is in the fullest sense confluent. The Epistle to the Romans, for example, is truly the work of Paul, who freely wrote it and whose personality and idiosyncrasies are reflected therein. The style is his because he is the author. The words are his, for he freely chose them. The argument and reasoning are the reflection of his own mind, for no one dictated the premises to him. Neither did God dictate levicula like the greetings ("Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes," etc.); these are spontaneous salutations which God knew Paul would deliver under such circumstances; so also the interjection of his amanuensis Tertius (Rom 16.22). Paul's full range of emotions, his memory lapses (I Cor 1.14–16), his personal asides (Gal 6.11) are all authentic products of human consciousness. God knew what Paul would freely write in the various circumstances in which he found himself and weakly actualized the writing of the Pauline corpus. Perhaps some features of Paul's letters are a matter of indifference to God: maybe it would not have mattered to God whether Paul greeted Phlegon or not; perhaps God would have been just as pleased had Paul worded some things differently; perhaps the Scripture need not have been

just as it is to accomplish God's purposes. We cannot know. But we can confess that Scripture as it does stand is God-breathed and therefore authoritative. The Bible says what God wanted to say and communicates his message of salvation to mankind.

Some of the statements of the classical defenders of the doctrine of verbal, plenary, confluent inspiration fairly cry out for such a middle knowledge perspective. Here is what Warfield, for example, has to say about the inspiration of Paul's letters:

So soon, however, as we seriously endeavor to form for ourselves a clear conception of the precise nature of the Divine action in this 'breathing out' of the Scriptures – this 'bearing' of the writers of the Scriptures to their appointed goal of the production of a book of Divine trustworthiness and indefectible authority – we become acutely aware of a more deeply lying and much wider problem, apart from which this one of inspiration, technically so called, cannot be profitably considered. This is the general problem of the origin of the Scriptures and the part of God in all that complex of processes by the interaction of which these books, which we call the sacred Scriptures, with all their peculiarities, and all their qualities of whatever sort, have been brought into being. For, of course, these books were not produced suddenly, by some miraculous act – handed down complete out of heaven, as the phrase goes; but, like all other products of time, are the ultimate effect of many processes cooperating through long periods. There is to be considered, for instance, the preparation of the material which forms the subject-matter of these books: in a sacred history, say, for example, to be narrated; or in a religious experience which may serve as a norm for record; or in a logical elaboration of the contents of revelation which may be placed at the service of God's people; or in the progressive revelation of Divine truth itself, supplying their culminating contents. And there is the preparation of the men to write these books to be considered, a preparation physical, intellectual, spiritual, which must have attended them throughout their whole lives, and, indeed, must

have had its beginning in their remote ancestors, and the effect of which was to bring the right men to the right places at the right times, with the right endowments, impulses, acquirements, to write just the books which were designed for them. When ‘inspiration,’ technically so called, is superinduced on lines of preparation like these, it takes on quite a different aspect from that which it bears when it is thought of as an isolated action of the Divine Spirit operating out of all relation to historical processes. Representations are sometimes made as if, when God wished to produce sacred books which would incorporate His will – a series of letters like those of Paul, for example – He was reduced to the necessity of going down to earth and painfully scrutinizing the men He found there, seeking anxiously for the one who, on the whole, promised best for His purpose; and then violently forcing the material He wished expressed through him, against his natural bent, and with as little loss from his recalcitrant characteristics as possible. Of course, nothing of the sort took place. If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul’s He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters.[144]

Divine middle knowledge illumines such an interpretation, since God knew what Paul would write if placed in certain circumstances and knew how to bring about such circumstances without extinguishing human freedom along the way. Warfield comments that when we give due weight in our thinking to the universality of providence, to the minuteness and completeness of its sway, to its invariable efficacy, then we may wonder that anything "is needed beyond this mere providential government to secure the production of sacred books, which should be in every detail absolutely accordant with the Divine will."145 Revelation will be needed in some cases for truths not accessible through natural reason. Moreover, we must never forget that the circumstances known to God include, not exclude, all those movements of the Holy Spirit in an author's heart to which God knew the writer would respond in appropriate ways.

Given the doctrine of middle knowledge, then, we see how plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration can, pace Spinoza, Le Clerc, and Simon, be coherently affirmed. The distinction between strong and weak actualization reveals how the control described in (2) by Basinger and Basinger is possible.146 We can understand how the divine/human confluence in the events of redemptive history insisted on by Carson is possible without falling into determinism. Finally, we can see why Geisler was right to maintain that God's ability to control the free composition of Scripture does not imply his ability to so control the free actions of all persons that a world containing as much good as the actual world but with less evil would be actualized. God might well have requisite control of the authors of Scripture to ensure that Scripture would be freely written without having requisite control of all human beings to ensure that less evil, but the same amount of good, would be freely wrought. In fact, God's placing a premium on actualizing a world in which the human authors would freely compose Scripture might require him to forego worlds in which an otherwise better balance of good and evil is achieved. Indeed, the existence of Scripture in the world might actually serve to increase the amount of evil in the world by exacerbating sinful desires (Rom 7.7–8)! It all depends on which counterfactuals of creaturely freedom

are true, a contingency over which God has no control. A world in which Scripture is freely composed and in which the balance between good and evil is more optimal than it is in the actual world may not be feasible for God. Basinger and Basinger are in effect claiming that

10. A world in which an inspired, inerrant Scripture is freely written is feasible for God

and

11. A world containing as much good as the actual world without as much evil is not feasible for God

are broadly logically incompatible or, at least, improbable each with respect to the other. But such claims are pure speculation; we are simply not in an epistemic position to make responsibly such pronouncements. Thus, in the area of biblical inspiration, as in so many other areas of theology, the doctrine of divine middle knowledge proves to be a fruitful resource in shedding light on seemingly irresolvable old conundrums.147 The doctrine is, of course, controversial and has many detractors, but, as we shall see when we come to the locus De Deo: Attributa Dei, the objections lodged against that doctrine are far from compelling.148

2.4.3 Historical Precedents

As it turns out, the application of divine middle knowledge to the doctrine of scriptural inspiration is not entirely new. Indeed, according to Burtchaell it was, in fact, “the most venerable” of those “discredited views from which practically every writer [in the nineteenth century] took comfort in disassociating himself in his footnotes.”149

In 1588, the same year that saw the publication of Molina's Concordia, a papal brief was issued declaring a moratorium on a controversy involving a young Jesuit theologian of the University of Louvain Leonard Leys (Lessius) concerning a long list of theological charges which had been brought against him.150 The previous year, the theological faculty had extracted from his students' notes 34 propositions which they publicly condemned. Three of these dealt with the subject of biblical inspiration. They read:

For anything to be Holy Scripture, its individual words need not be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The individual truths and statements need not be immediately inspired in the writer by the Holy Spirit.

If any book … were to be written through purely human endeavor without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and he should then certify that there was nothing false therein, the book would become Holy Scripture.151

The theological faculty of the University of Louvain censured Lessius for these propositions, stating that Sacred Scripture is not the word of man, but the Word of God, dictated by the Holy Spirit. The University of Douay joined in the censure, explaining that dictation is not just a suggestion in general, but of the words themselves: there is not a syllable or accent in Scripture which is trifling or superfluous.

Now among the other propositions condemned were statements concerning grace and free will which indicate that Lessius was groping for the doctrine of middle knowledge which Molina first succeeded in formulating clearly and accurately. According to Burtchaell:

The crux of the Louvain-Jesuit dispute was this issue of grace and free-will. The three censured propositions on inspiration formed but a

small part of a total of thirty-two which bore on this larger problem. The faculty rightly saw that Lessius's inspiration hypotheses were the logical application of the general Jesuit idea of grace: they provided for both divine authorship and human literary freedom by making divine intervention only indirect.152

Whether we regard Lessius as, in Woodbridge's epithet,153 a "slippery" theologian or a subtle dialectician will probably depend on our openness to the Molinist point of view. Claiming that he had been misunderstood, Lessius wrote an Apologia in which he explained how he interpreted the disputed propositions.154 By (i) and (ii) he meant that the authors of Scripture did not need a new and positive inspiration or new illumination from God to write down each word of Scripture. As he later explained:

We are teaching that, for anything to be Holy Scripture, its every word and statement need not be positively and absolutely inspired in the author, with the Holy Spirit supplying and forming in his mind the individual words and statements. It is enough that the sacred writer be divinely drawn to write down what he sees, hears, or knows otherwise, that he enjoy the infallible assistance of the Holy Spirit to prevent him from mistakes even in matters he knows on the word of others, or from his own experience, or by his own natural reasoning. It is this assistance of the Holy Spirit that gives Scripture its infallible truth.155

Lessius gave two reasons in support of his position: (1) The Evangelists did not need a new revelation to record the life of Jesus, since they either were witnesses themselves or had historical tradition of it. (2) The Holy Spirit chose competent instruments, gifted with the ability to express themselves, whom he then stirred to write of what they knew and whom he assisted to keep [them] from error.

Mangenot thinks that taken literally propositions (i) and (ii) as stated would be incompatible with the inspiration of Scripture;156 but it is evident from the above explanation that what Lessius was really exercised to do was to deny the dictation theory of inspiration.

Lessius insisted that the impulse and assistance of the Holy Spirit were compatible with the human author's recalling things from memory, organizing his material, utilizing his peculiar style of expression, and so on. He affirmed that the entire Scripture is the Word of God and was even, in a certain sense, dictated by the Holy Spirit. We have seen that even so redoubtable a champion of verbal inspiration as Warfield affirmed that dictation has reference to the result, not the mode, of inspiration, and Lessius seems to affirm the same.

According to Burtchaell, Lessius' three propositions reduce God's role in the production of Scripture to three corresponding activities:

supplying of ideas, but not of words, to the authors;

protecting the authors from error; and

providing a post factum guarantee of scriptural inerrancy.157

Eventually these convictions became the official party line of the Jesuits. But it seems that these inferences arise from misunderstandings of the nature of inspiration which are no part of a middle knowledge perspective. As portrayed by Burtchaell, Lessius seems to be guilty of two confusions: (1) He conflates the notions of inspiration and revelation, and (2) he thinks of inspiration as a property of the authors, rather than of the text, of Scripture. Both of these are common mistakes which were gestating since the time of the Church Fathers and would finally find their ugly issue in Spinoza's Tractatus.

With respect to (1) the mistake arises by treating all Scripture on the model of prophecy. As a direct revelation from God, prophecy communicates information which transcends natural knowledge. If we understand revelation to be the disclosure of things otherwise unknown, then things naturally known by the human authors of Scripture have not, therefore, been revealed to them by God. Thus, if

inspiration is co-extensive with revelation (so understood), then when the authors of Scripture write of matters about which they already know, it follows that they are not inspired. But since “all Scripture is inspired by God” (II Tim 3.16), this conflation is clearly a mistake, for not all Scripture is of the genre of prophecy. Even Scripture which does not involve the direct revelation of supernatural knowledge by God is inspired. Therefore, the fact that the Evangelists did not need a new revelation in order to record Jesus’ life is no proof that the Gospels are not inspired.

With respect to (2), the Scripture states that it is the text, not the authors, of Scripture which is inspired (II Tim 3.16). True, the prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit to speak (II Pet 1.21), but it is a mistake to equate inspiration with this movement, so as to imply that because Scripture is verbally inspired therefore the authors were moved immediately by the Holy Spirit to write this or that particular word.158 It is the Scripture which is God-breathed, not the authors. Thus, it is wholly erroneous to think that use of memory, research, effort, borrowing, and so forth, on the part of the author is incompatible with the final result of his labors, the text, being inspired. Thus, to speak, as Lessius does, of the authors’ having no need of new and positive inspiration for writing what they did is to misconstrue inspiration as a sort of illumination of the author’s mind – which, he rightly observes, seems unnecessary for much of Scripture – rather than as a quality of the final text, the quality of being God’s Word. When Lessius denies that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write, “Luke alone is with me; Trophimus I left ill at Miletus” (II Tim 4.20), he is tilting at windmills.

Once we understand that inspiration is a property of the text, not the authors, then we shall not be tempted to embrace the view, popular among Lessius’ successors until its condemnation at Vatican I, that inspiration consists merely in the Holy Spirit’s playing a sort of watchdog role of preventing the biblical authors from falling into error.159 Such a role is compatible with human freedom160 and no doubt is part of the Spirit’s superintendence of the composition of Scripture along with the providential preparation of the authors; but it

is not what inspiration is. Nor shall we be tempted to embrace another vestige of Lessius, what is known in German theology as Realinspiration, the theory that God inspired the propositional content of Scripture and the human authors supplied its linguistic expression.161 Under the influence of the Jesuit tradition, this seems to have been the position adopted by Richard Simon. This theory again misconstrues inspiration as a work of God in the authors' minds, providing them with propositional content which they clothe with words. A little reflection reveals that such a theory, besides misconstruing the nature of inspiration, actually constricts the authors' freedom, since they are not free to express whatever propositions they wish but only those God gives them. Moreover, the propositional content of Scripture may be so specific as to require certain words and expressions in a given language, so that we again approach dictation. The theory does nothing, moreover, to explain the levicula. And it remains mysterious how God could communicate his propositional truth to someone wholly without linguistic formulation. Thus, once we distinguish inspiration from revelation and understand inspiration to be a property belonging to the text, we see that a middle knowledge perspective in no wise denies that the very words of Scripture are inspired (whether or not they count as revelation) nor does it limit the Spirit's role to the merely negative role of protection from error.

Lessius' third proposition and the inference drawn from it raise the issue of what distinguishes Scripture as God's Word, if it is not dictated by the Holy Spirit. In implying that a book would become Scripture merely in virtue of the Spirit's certifying it to be inerrant, proposition (iii) represents a clear non sequitur. Inerrancy is not a sufficient condition of being God's Word. Lessius qualified his position by saying that a statement later certified to be true by the Holy Spirit would be as authoritative as if the Spirit had uttered it through a prophet. There is no reason to object; but again there is no reason to think that such a true statement should then be incorporated into the canon of Scripture. The real question raised by Lessius' third proposition is whether some book of Scripture might

have been written without any special assistance by the Holy Spirit and yet still be inspired in virtue of the Spirit's ratification of it as his Word. Lessius gives the very intriguing illustration of a king who by approving and signing a document that his secretary has drawn up makes it his own royal decree.162 Now from a middle knowledge perspective, there is no question of God's later ratifying a document which he did not foreknow or did not providentially bring about. Rather the question is whether God could be confronted with counterfactuals of creaturely freedom which are such as to permit him to weakly actualize a book of Scripture by means of his general providence alone without his acting as a primary cause influencing the act of writing itself. I see no reason to think that this is impossible. But then what, we may ask, would distinguish such a book as Sacred Scripture as opposed to any other product of human effort equally under the general providence of God? Presumably the answer would lie in God's intent to bring about a book designed to make us wise unto salvation and ultimately in his ratification of that book as his Word to us.

Now if such a middle knowledge perspective on biblical inspiration found expression, however inchoately, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, why was it abandoned? Burtchaell mentions three reasons: (1) If the minimal requirement for biblical writing were divine preservation from error, then the Scriptures are not distinguished from official Church proclamations which also enjoy this protection. Part of the answer to this objection, from a Protestant viewpoint, is that Scripture alone has this special protection and hence is uniquely authoritative. More fundamentally, however, what distinguishes a writing as Scripture is God's intent that that writing be his gracious Word to mankind. (2) Infallibility is insufficient to make a human utterance into the Word of God. We readily agree. Even if some book of Scripture were written without any special promptings or assistance of the Holy Spirit, it is Scripture, not in virtue of its inerrancy, but because God in his providence prepared such a book to be his Word to us. (3) The theory is too conservative and so was eclipsed. It is not a Molinist theory of inspiration based on middle

knowledge which is too conservative; rather what is deemed too conservative is the doctrine of verbal, plenary, confluent inspiration. Doubtless, many would agree. At present, however, we are concerned only with the coherence of that doctrine, not its truth. Given a middle knowledge perspective, the coherence of the classical doctrine of the verbal, plenary, confluent inspiration of Scripture becomes perspicuous.

In conclusion, it seems that the traditional doctrine of the plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration of Scripture is a coherent doctrine, given divine middle knowledge. Because God knew the relevant counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, he was able to decree a world containing just those circumstances and persons such that the authors of Scripture would freely compose their respective writings, which God intended to be his gracious Word to us. In the providence of God, the Bible is thus both the Word of God and the word of man.

2.5 Implications of Scriptural Inspiration

Implicit in the view we have articulated are a number of important conclusions regarding the doctrine of Scripture as taught by Scripture.

2.5.1 Propositional Revelation

First, Scripture is a verbal communication from God to man and thus in that sense a propositional revelation from God. While Scripture may not always be revelatory in the sense of disclosing things otherwise unknown, it is an objective revelation given by God in the sense of a communication from him to us. Moreover, that revelation is propositional in nature, not in the philosophical sense of the word, which would distinguish propositions from sentences, but in the ordinary language sense that Scripture is a linguistic deposit

comprising sentences that God wants to communicate. God's revelation is thus not merely of himself but also of various truths.

2.5.2 Divine Authority

Second, as a divine revelation or communication from God, Scripture carries the authority of God. Inspiration, not in the sense of a divine action upon the authors of Scripture, but rather in the sense of a property of the text, the property of being God-breathed, of being God's Word to us, regardless of the mechanism, whether prompting certain authors to speak, as in prophetic utterance, or weakly actualizing the writing of Scripture by arranging the circumstances in which God knew that certain persons would freely write as they did, is the ground of the authority that Scripture possesses. God has uniquely intended Scripture to be his Word to us.

2.5.3 Truth

Third, Scripture authoritatively communicates to us various truths about God. Certainly Scripture does much more than this, for it is profitable not only for teaching and for reproof, but also "for correction, and for training in righteousness" (II Tim 3.16). As Christians read Scripture, we find that it convicts us of sin and evokes in us a sense of gratitude and worship and kindles within us a desire to share the Good News with others. So Scripture obviously serves a multitude of ends in the Christian life.163 But it explicitly and clearly also serves the end of teaching. It communicates to us various truths about God, about ourselves, about how we are to be rightly related to God, and about what God has done on our behalf to make that possible. Timothy is urged to "guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (II Tim 1.14) and to "continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to

instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (I Tim 3.14–15).

Scripture is thus the basis for Christian doctrine, as all the major confessions of Christendom agree today. Even the Roman Catholic Church, despite treating Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition with "equal reverence and piety," recognizes Scripture as the ultimate fount from which tradition flows. Where Protestants and Catholics differ is not on Scripture's being the final authority for Christian doctrine but on whether the Roman Catholic Church has accurately unpacked what is alleged to be implicit in scriptural teaching. Even the Ecumenical Creeds derive what authority they possess ultimately from Scripture and must be assessed by it for their fidelity to its teaching.164

2.5.4 Inerrancy

Fourth, as God's authoritative Word to us, Scripture is truthful in all that it teaches. This conclusion seems the inevitable consequence of all Scripture's being inspired by God and therefore profitable for teaching us the truths God wants us to know. The Scriptures obviously contain falsehoods, but one cannot allow that it teaches falsehoods. An example that is almost embarrassing for its jejuneness but useful precisely for that reason is Jesus' comparison of the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed: "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree" (Mt 13.31–32). It is indisputable that the content of Jesus' teaching is not botany but the inauspicious nature of the inbreaking Kingdom of God in his person. Hence, while it is false that the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, no one in his right mind regards Jesus' words as teaching a falsehood.

2.5.4.1 Formulating the Doctrine of Inerrancy

The doctrine that Scripture is truthful in all that it teaches is known today as the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. We have seen that, far from being the late creation of modern fundamentalism, this doctrine has been universally affirmed throughout church history and is implicit in the traditional doctrine of biblical inspiration. Today this doctrine is widely but needlessly despised. As Orr observes, the author of II Tim 3.16 does not say that divine inspiration of Scripture "secured verbal inerrancy in ordinary historical, geographical, chronological, or scientific matters. But it seems at least clearly implied that there was no error which could interfere with or nullify the utility of Scripture for the ends specified."165 Not only does it seem inconceivable that God could teach us doctrinal falsehoods, but Scripture in any case explicitly affirms that what he teaches us is doctrinal truths. The controversial question, then, ought not to be "Is Scripture truthful in all that it teaches?" but rather "What does Scripture teach?"

So, for example, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, which is representative of the view of many contemporary evangelical theologians, states: "Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives."166 This statement rightly affirms that Scripture is truthful in whatever it teaches on any subject. The question is, what does it teach, if anything, about scientific, historical, or literary matters?

2.5.4.2 Inspiration and Inerrancy

Thus Barr's question is the appropriate one: "What evidence is there that a biblical writer like II Peter [sic] who used the word translated as 'inspired' expressly and definitely intended this to mean 'without error in all matters of history, geography, scientific fact and so on, including authorship of books, dates and the like?'"167 Barr thinks

that we should affirm the verbal inspiration of Scripture, since it is a linguistic deposit, but he charges that there is no essential connection between verbal inspiration and inerrancy in this sense.168 For Warfield and those who followed him, Barr alleges:

> There was no need to prove… that the writer of II Peter [sic], in saying that all scripture was inspired, had deliberately and expressly intended to affirm that it was historically inerrant in such matters as the genealogies of Genesis, the figures in Chronicles, the authorship of Isaiah, of the pentateuch or Titus, all of which were subjects totally unknown as themes of debate in his time, and that he included exactly and only the canonical books of the Bible, leaving none of these out, and excluded exactly all of the Apocrypha. There is in fact not the slightest reason to suppose that the writer of II Peter [sic] intended any of this, much less that he intended all of it.169

Later Barr does acknowledge that evangelical theologians have tried to establish a link between inspiration and inerrancy, but he dismisses their argument as “philosophical”:

> The link between authority or inspiration on the one side and inerrancy on the other rests on one basis only: supposition. Here conservative evangelicals go over to a purely philosophical and non-biblical argument: if it was inspired by God, then how could there be error of any kind in it? This is in fact the core of their argument. But, since this link has no rootage in the Bible and belongs to purely philosophical assumption, the entire attempt of conservative evangelicals to derive their position from ‘the Bible’s view of itself’ is a waste of time.170

Barr’s dismissal of philosophical argument will doubtless strike readers of this volume as pretty unimpressive, along with his misguided attempt to isolate biblical interpretation from philosophy.171 A sound philosophical argument for biblical inerrancy would secure that doctrine just as would a purely biblical argument,

and the availability of such a philosophical argument would make a purely exegetical argument at best superfluous, but hardly “a waste of time.”

Interestingly, Barr does engage more seriously a philosophical argument linking inspiration and inerrancy still later in his book, which he characterizes as an argument from the concept of divine perfection: “The nature of God is to be perfect; and if he involves himself in something, as he would do in inspiring a collection of books, these books would partake in the divine qualities of perfection.”172 Though Barr himself thinks that theologians should take advantage of the “new and liberating developments” in theology that deny God’s perfection, he acknowledges that the idea of God as perfect “at least has some apparent justification,” in contrast to the extension of perfection to the Bible.173 I doubt that such a philosophical argument aimed at linking inspiration to inerrancy on the basis of God’s perfection is widespread among evangelical theologians, since they know that God’s creation of the world, for example, does not imply that the world is perfect, as opposed to simply good.

Stephen Davis in his book on biblical inerrancy knows of no such argument as Barr imagines but rather lists the following three arguments typically offered on behalf of inerrancy: (i) the biblical argument (the Bible teaches its own inerrancy), (ii) the epistemological argument (without an inerrant Bible Christians have no sound epistemological foundation upon which to base their beliefs), and (iii) the slippery slope argument (denial of inerrancy will in some way lead to abandonment of orthodox Christian faith).174 Davis devotes a chapter to each of these arguments, the latter two of which he notes without disparagement are “philosophical.”

In response to (i), Davis’ principal objection is that the Bible does not teach inerrancy, understood in the sense that the Bible makes “no false or misleading statements on any topic whatsoever.”175 This characterization is, however, obviously a straw man. “What the Bible does clearly teach, I believe, is its own inspiration, authority, and

reliability."176 Davis affirms the infallibility of the Bible, understood to mean that the Bible makes "no false or misleading statements on any matter of faith and practice."177 Curiously, however, Davis does not claim that infallibility follows from biblical inspiration. He affirms biblical infallibility "not because it deductively follows from some doctrine of inspiration" but because "the Bible seems to me describable in this way."178 This affirmation requires Davis to break loose Scripture's admitted teaching authority and reliability from its truthfulness on matters of faith and practice–in plain contradiction to II Tim 3.16. How the infallibility of Scripture could be justified inductively, as Davis imagines, is entirely unclear, for how could one verify the truth of the Bible concerning matters of faith and practice like the doctrine of the Trinity or the rite of baptism?

In response to (ii), Davis correctly judges that the truth of Christian faith does not hang on inerrancy defined as he and Barr understand it. But what about infallibility? Would it not be the case that in the absence of an infallible Scripture the basis for Christian doctrine would be seriously undermined? While it is true that some Christian doctrines–for example, the existence of God or the resurrection of Jesus–could be known apart from the authoritative teaching of Scripture and so would not be undermined by the demonstration that Scripture teaches doctrinal falsehoods, still Christian faith would surely be seriously compromised with respect to many doctrines–for example, justification by grace through faith–without an infallible teaching authority. Davis rebuffs the claim of a "limited inerrantist" like Daniel Fuller that "If there is one error anywhere in what Scripture intends to teach, then everything it intends to say is suspect and we have not even one sure word from God."179 Davis does rightly criticize Fuller's identification of the revelational content of Scripture (what it intends to teach) with its non-empirical and, hence, untestable content, for some revelational content of the Bible–for example, Jesus' resurrection–is historically testable.180 But Fuller's concern does not depend on his mistaken equation of the revelational content of Scripture with its untestable content. Since an important part of Christian doctrine cannot be established

independent of Scripture, the fallibility of Scripture in doctrinal matters would seriously undermine Christian faith.

In response to (ii), Davis also presents a clever objection to the importance of inerrancy by pointing out that none of us today has an inerrant Scripture, since transcriptional errors have crept into the text, and yet Christian faith is unimpaired. This is an effective riposte to those who think that the sort of extreme inerrancy criticized by Barr and Davis is essential to Christian faith, but it is ineffective against restricted inerrantists and infallibilists, for the admission of doctrinal errors in Scripture is a different kettle of fish than the errors Davis is concerned with. Rather the real problem with the epistemological argument is that it provides no grounds for thinking that the Bible is or even claims to be inerrant (or infallible); it amounts to the cry, “Woe to us if it is not!”

Finally, in response to (iii), Davis does not really address the concern that denominations that no longer require their members or ministers to subscribe to biblical inerrancy (or infallibility) tend to drift theologically, with the result that future generations no longer adhere to orthodox Christianity. This danger is a very real concern, and Davis’ response that “There simply is no way for any Christian or Christian group to guarantee today what Christians will or will not believe tomorrow” is of no comfort.181 Once again, however, this sort of concern, like all slippery slope arguments, is just irrelevant to the truth of the position at issue.

Rather, the central argument connecting inspiration to inerrancy typically has to do with God’s being essentially truthful.182 Geisler offers this simple version of the argument:

God cannot err.

The Bible is the Word of God.

Therefore, the Bible cannot err.

The argument is invalid as stated, and any attempt to explicate it further will inevitably be simplistic, for inerrantists recognize that truthfulness attends only to what God teaches or asserts, which brings us back to the question, what do the Scriptures teach?

2.5.4.3 The Teaching of Scripture

In Barr's view, "The fundamentalist argument can be described as a simple literary function-mistake. The entirety of the utterances ascribed to Jesus is treated as 'teaching'; and no adequate distinction is drawn between that which Jesus seeks to teach, the message which he seeks to communicate, and any or all of the elements which are found in his utterance."183 So Barr complains about "an element that is very deeply embedded in all fundamentalist faith and practice, namely the didactic emphasis. Biblical texts are thought of as containing teaching, nay, of being teaching."184 He criticizes John Wenham, for example, for saying that Jesus taught some sort of verbal inspiration or the divine authorship of the OT Scriptures.185

Now Barr's reservations about such a didactic emphasis is prima facie puzzling. Jesus was known as a teacher (Mt 8.19; 9.11; 10.24; 12.38; 17.24; 19.16, etc.) and the Gospels repeatedly refer to his teaching activity (Mt 4.23; 7.28; Mk 10.1; 14.49; Lk 20.1; 23.5; Jn 7.17; 18.19, etc.).186 Barr cannot be denying this aspect of Jesus' ministry. It seems, rather, that we should understand Barr to be underlining his point about inerrantists' failing to discriminate between what Jesus taught and elements of his utterances that are too readily assumed by inerrantists to be part of his teaching because of inerrantists' "very heavy didactic bias."187 Just as in the case of the mustard seed, this lack of discrimination subverts their argument. Barr is surely correct that evangelicals should resist overly easy proofs of authorship and historicity based on OT citations by NT authors or by Jesus.188 A genuine effort needs to be made to discern what, if anything, any scriptural passage teaches.

Evangelicals are, in fact, well aware of what is typically referred to as “the phenomena of Scripture,” which often seem at odds with the literal truth of what a scriptural passage says. Virtually no inerrantist would agree with Orr’s characterization of inerrancy as “hard and fast literality in minute matters of historical, geographical, and scientific detail.”189 Inerrantists are typically quite ready to deny in cases of historical, geographical, or scientific falsehood that Scripture teaches or affirms the relevant falsehoods. So the Chicago Statement declares:

> We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.
>
> We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. However, in determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of his penman’s milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

Geisler says that it is by means of the phenomena of Scripture that we know that inspiration does not guarantee the truth of statements such as mentioned above. “What the Bible says must be understood in view of what the Bible shows… . The doctrine of Scripture is to be understood in light of the data of Scripture.”190 We learn from Scripture itself what an inerrant Scripture looks like. So, for example, we learn that inspiration does not guarantee that everything recorded, as opposed to everything taught, in the Bible is true, that no exaggeration or hyperbole can be used, that all statements about

God and creation are literal, that all factual assertions are precise by modern standards, that all statements about the universe must be from a modern astronomical perspective, that all citations of Scripture must be verbatim, that the same truth must be said in only one way, that whatever a writer personally believed is true, and so on.191

2.5.4.4 The Phenomena of Scripture and Inerrancy

The question facing us is how best to reconcile such phenomena of Scripture with Scripture's implied truthfulness in all that it teaches. Neatly distinguishing between the statements of Scripture and the presuppositions of Scripture, Swinburne would exclude the latter from belonging to the teaching of Scripture.192 Since a revelation which is culturally independent of its recipients would be problematic in various ways, Swinburne maintains that a doctrine of creation, for example, that teaches that God is the cause of the world might be expressed to an ancient people like the Jews on the presupposition that the world was as described by the then current science (e.g., a flat Earth, a solid firmament, a 4,000 year old universe, and so on). So long as the literary context allows a clear distinction between statement and presupposition, false scientific presuppositions would not render the revelation false.193 Such a distinction would hold if the revelation were announced as a rival to some other theological message which shared a common scientific worldview (as was the case for ancient Israel in the face of pagan polytheism). That would show that the worldview was not part of the revelation but rather was something taken for granted in the culture that the revelation was not concerned to correct.194

Nonetheless, differentiating between the statements of Scripture and the presuppositions of Scripture does not serve, in Swinburne's mind, to wholly exonerate the Scriptures from error. For "the modern world… has become very conscious of the fact that some passages of the Old Testament cannot be treated in this way; for they state

(and not merely presuppose) scientific and historical falsities, or they represent God as commanding immoral conduct… or otherwise behaving immorally."195 So if one reads the books of the OT "on their own," one must certainly say that God's inspiration got mixed with much error. As examples of obvious scientific and historical falsities, Swinburne mentions the creation of woman in Gen 2 and the recent, universal flood of Gen 7–9, stories which Swinburne thinks were meant to be taken literally; as an obvious example of God's commanding immoral conduct or behaving immorally, Swinburne has in mind, not, as one might suspect, the sacrifice of Isaac or the slaughter of the Canaanites, the morality of which Swinburne elsewhere defends,196 but rather an imprecatory Psalm like Ps 137.197 We may leave to the side the question whether the relevant statements are, indeed, false or morally unacceptable.198 More important for our purposes is how Swinburne avoids the implication that Scripture therefore teaches error.

He says that "what the modern world has forgotten" is that the Church followed the Church Fathers "in interpreting in metaphorical senses any passages of that Testament which were not edifying if taken in straight or historical senses."199 Swinburne says that the Church of Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine, the Church that established the canon of Scripture, taught that the way in which the Bible ought to be read is metaphorically but not always also literally.200 Swinburne observes that "Origen's principles of interpretation had immense influence on all subsequent interpretation of Scripture. Beryl Smalley has written that 'to write a history of Origenist influence on the West would be tantamount to writing a history of Western exegesis' and – she could have added – Eastern exegesis as well."201

But during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, laments Swinburne, the Bible came to be interpreted by many Protestants in "perhaps the most literal and insensitive way in which it has ever been interpreted in Christian history."202 This literalism was encouraged by the mistake of equating the meaning which the text came to have in the wider context of the Christian Bible with the

original meaning of the text. Here Swinburne does give an example of what he has in mind: taken “on its own” the Song of Songs is an erotic love poem; but understood within the context of the Bible as a whole it was properly taken by the Church Fathers to be about God’s love for Israel and the Church. For Swinburne it is unthinkable (ludicrous) that the Christian Bible as canonized and promulgated by the Church should include without a change of meaning an erotic love poem. So there is “always one acid test” for those who aspire to interpret the Bible in terms of the original meaning of its books: how do you interpret the Song of Songs? “If we are misguided enough to interpret the Bible in terms of the ‘original meaning’ of the text, that original meaning is often false: there is scientific, historical, moral, and theological falsity in the Bible, if it is so interpreted.”203 This untoward conclusion is avoided by interpreting the troublesome passages metaphorically. A metaphorical meaning is forced on a passage, not by the need to make sense of that passage “taken on its own” but by the need to make sense of it “as part of Christian Scripture.”204

What shall we say about Swinburne’s attempt to defend the truth of biblical statements? First, it must be said that his claim that taking the meaning of a passage of the Bible to be the original meaning of the text leads to literalism and insensitivity in biblical interpretation is not merely unjustified but demonstrably mistaken. By Swinburne’s own admission the vast majority of biblical scholars today reject the imposition of metaphorical meanings on the text that Swinburne advocates, but for all that they are certainly not literalists. Swinburne seems to overlook the fact that the original text itself may be metaphorical or figurative in character, a fact which inerrantists recognize. For example, the descriptions of the creation of the Earth in Gen 1 are very plausibly figurative and so do not presuppose a flat Earth, a solid firmament, and a 4,000 year old universe, as Swinburne assumes.205 As previously noted, the entire primaeval history of Gen 1–11 plausibly belongs to the genre of mytho-history and so should not be interpreted literally. Swinburne himself classes the biblical narratives of Daniel in the lions’ den and Jonah and the

whale as moral fables, not history.206 Moreover, he recognizes that determination of the genre of biblical texts may be difficult and controversial, so that it is not always clear whether the original author intended that his narrative be taken historically.207 Biblical literature includes a plethora of genres, some of which, like poetry and apocalyptic, are obviously not to be interpreted literally. So it is a fundamental mistake to think that interpreting the Bible according to the meanings of the original texts which it comprises leads to literalness and insensitivity.

Second, as for Swinburne's positive proposal that the Christian Church may impose metaphorical meanings on non-metaphorical texts, he exaggerates the degree to which the Church has accepted Origenist principles for handling problematic texts.208 What is correct is that the Church embraced a three-fold meaning of the biblical text which included spiritual or allegorical readings of the text in addition to the literal and moral reading; but that does not imply that the literal reading might be regarded as false. Thomas Aquinas, for example, insisted, "all the senses are founded on one – the literal – from which alone can any argument be drawn… . Hence, it is plain that nothing false can underlie the literal sense of Scripture" (Summa theologiae Ia.1.10). Indeed, "It is heretical to say that any falsehood whatsoever is contained either in the gospels or in any canonical Scripture" (Commentary on the Book of Job 13, lecture 1). Swinburne recognizes the fact that accepting a three-fold interpretation of the biblical text does not imply accepting that the literal interpretation may be regarded as false, but he tends to downplay the fact.

Moreover, the question arises: in cases in which the literal meaning of the text is clearly false, is the hermeneutic of metaphorical re-interpretation the most plausible solution for the inerrantist? That seems dubious. The Church's attempt to impose metaphorical meanings foreign to the original text has resulted in interpretations that are fanciful and capricious and so plausibly wrong.209 The Church has failed to speak with a single voice on these interpretive questions, as Swinburne admits, so that the multitudinous

interpretations that have been proffered have no ecclesiastical authority but, being unchecked by the original meaning of the text, are arbitrary impositions. Many of these interpretations are fantastic to the point of being amusing.210 It is hard to believe therefore that they provide the correct interpretation of the canonical text.

A further problem with Swinburne's strategy emerges when we reflect on how long it took for the Church's reinterpretation of the original texts to occur. Swinburne affirms that since God is omniscient and perfectly good, he will not tell us anything false.211 But since many scriptural statements, and not merely presuppositions, are on this view false, it follows that for well over a millennium God did teach his people falsehoods as truths, until the Church Fathers should come along to straighten things out.

Evangelical interpreters have therefore not been sympathetic to imposing metaphorical meanings foreign to the original texts in order to save inerrancy. Rather they tend simply to deny that the falsehoods found in Scripture belong to the teaching of Scripture. It is important to understand that the teaching of Scripture, especially on the Molinist perspective defended here, is not identical to the linguistic meaning of the original text. The lesson to be learned from a particular passage may not be among the declarative sentences making up that passage. Consider, for example, Swinburne's acid test of the Song of Songs. God might include this erotic love poem in Scripture to teach us about the goodness of human sexuality and the beauty of marriage as given by God to man (Gen 2.24–25). Had the Church not obscured this message by imposing metaphorical interpretations on the text, we might have been spared the enormous harm wrought by centuries of negative attitudes toward human sexuality which came to expression in asceticism and monasticism.212 Thus, what Scripture teaches us in the Song of Songs transcends the meaning of its sentences.

The real acid test for any doctrine of inspiration, I think, is the imprecatory Psalms. On Swinburne's view Ps 137.9 does not represent "a vengeful sentiment contrary to divine inspiration" but

rather has “a true metaphorical meaning.” Unfortunately, Swinburne does not tell us what that meaning is. On the perspective defended here, we may agree that the prayer, despite its vengeful sentiment, is not contrary to divine inspiration, for there is no suggestio verborum. The prayer may rather be understood as appropriated speech, a prayer which God via his middle knowledge knew the outraged Psalmist would offer in his anguish. Why would God include such a horrid prayer in Scripture? What does he intend to teach us thereby? – Perhaps the importance of being honest to God, of coming to him as we are, with no pretense of piety, and expressing the depth of our anger or disappointment with God or doubts about his faithfulness, as the Psalmists so often do. This and other Psalms teach us that God receives us as we are and is open to our prayers.

The point here is that the teaching of Scripture may not be identical with the meanings of the sentences of the text.213 Our view thus bears some similarity in that respect to Swinburne’s metaphorical view. To grasp the teaching of a passage of Scripture we may need to read it in light of other scriptural passages. God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, as the fullness of divine revelation, points us to the center of Scripture, what has been called the canon within the canon. But that is not to justify the imposition of meanings on the original texts which are foreign to them. Rather we are better able in light of the fullness of God’s revelation to discern their theological significance, given the meanings that they themselves bear. Inerrancy attaches to what the Scripture teaches; only what Scripture teaches is guaranteed to be true.

Many inerrantists do emphasize that it is impossible to separate history from Christian doctrine, so that what Scripture teaches about history must be as true as what it teaches about theology.214 In particular, the death and resurrection of Jesus must be affirmed as historical events by any biblically faithful Christian. We must agree that Christian doctrine is often inextricably bound up with the historicity of certain events, and whether this is so for any given event must be examined on a case by case basis. Certainly it is so in the case of Jesus’ death and resurrection, central as they are to the

Christian doctrine of salvation (I Cor 15.17). But while the historicity of these events belongs to the teaching of Scripture, it is far less clear that many of the details surrounding these same events belong to the teaching of Scripture. The Evangelists evidently felt a good deal of freedom in relating their stories, such that detailed accuracy was not always important.

J. D. G. Dunn has emphasized that the transmission of oral tradition is characterized by "both elements of stability and elements of variability – stability of subject and theme, of key details or core exchanges, variability in the supporting details and the particular emphases to be drawn out."215 The performer of oral tradition is at liberty to vary the incidental details of his story so long as the core themes and key phrases are maintained. In the Gospels the oral Jesus tradition has been frozen for us in time. On the basis of his study of the Gospels Dunn draws two conclusions: first, "the variations between the different versions of the same story in the tradition do not indicate a cavalier attitude to or lack of historical interest in the events narrated… . Rather, the variations exemplify the character of oral retelling."216 Second, "the differences introduced by the Evangelists, whether as oral diversity or as a literary editing, are consistently in the character of abbreviation and omission, clarification and explanation, elaboration and extension of motif… they do not appear to constitute any radical change in the substance or character or thrust of the story told."217 These results encourage "neither those who are content with nothing short of the historicity of every detail and word of the text nor those who can see and hear nothing other than the faith of the early churches."218

The Gospels share, in particular, a pre-Markan passion tradition that supplies the framework for the story of the final week of Jesus' life rooted in the memory of the participants in those events and put into that framework by them. It is no surprise, says Dunn, that the Evangelists should be free with less consequential details or elaborate matters of greater importance; but "there is little cause to doubt the historical character of the broad structure and sequence of the narrative or of its principal elements as initially formulated,

presumably, by eyewitness participants."219 Take, for example, the story of Peter's denial of Jesus following his arrest.220 The Evangelists all relate the story of how Peter followed the arresting party to the house of the high priest, where in the courtyard he was confronted successively by various people, particularly a maid, about his connection with Jesus, which he denies each time. After the third accusation, immediately the cock crows, just as Jesus had predicted. John appears to be working with an independent source (Jn 19.15–16), but in the Synoptics alone details about Peter's warming himself at the fire and his self-imprecation might or might not be included in the story. Moreover, the identity of his three accusers conflicts, as does the number of cock crows, leading some inerrantists to propose harmonizing the accounts by maintaining that Peter actually denied Jesus six times.221 Such a harmonization not only fails to reckon with the character of oral tradition but reconciles the details only at the expense of denying the unanimous affirmation of the Evangelists that Peter denied Jesus three times. In this case, it is more plausible to maintain that the Evangelists are content to allow the story of Peter's three-fold denial to be told in different ways, so long as the main point is maintained. An account exhibiting such flexibility would not have been thought to teach error as truth.

When we turn to the resurrection narratives, we find in the burial and empty tomb story the same stability of core tradition combined with flexibility in the circumstantial details.222 All four Gospels agree that Jesus of Nazareth was buried Friday afternoon by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb, which was sealed with a stone. Certain female followers of Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, having observed his interment, visited his tomb early on Sunday morning, only to find it empty. Many more details can be supplied by considering only the Synoptic tradition, as John seems to be based on an independent source. Concerning the resurrection appearances, since the Gospels relate different appearances, less comparative material is available concerning these stories. Instead we can observe the editorial freedom exercised by the Evangelists in shaping their narratives. Consider, for example, Luke's deliberate suppression of Galilean

resurrection appearance stories. Luke mentions in the preface to his Gospel the many accounts of Jesus that had been written and so knew of Galilean appearances from Mark's Gospel and perhaps Matthew's. He drops the angel's words in Mark predicting appearances in Galilee (Mk 16.7) in favor of predictions given while in Galilee (Lk 24.6–7). He even telescopes events to bring the ascension forward chronologically so that it seems to occur on Easter evening (Lk 24.50–51). It is only in his second volume that we learn of the forty-day interval between Easter and the ascension (Acts 1.3), though even then the impression is given that the disciples did not return to Galilee but remained in Jerusalem. Obviously Luke did not intend that his readers should believe that all the events narrated in Luke 24 occurred on Easter, nor is there any reason to think that he intended that his readers should believe that there were no Galilean appearances. For Luke knew that "many others" had already related those Galilean appearances, and his focus in Acts on Jerusalem and the Gentile mission makes his omission of Galilean appearances theologically intelligible. Luke intends to teach neither that the ascension occurred on Easter nor that there were no Galilean appearances.

Thus, our considering on a case by case basis the degree of historical accuracy to be ascribed to the Gospels does not threaten the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. In fact, as we shall see in greater detail when we come to the locus De Christo, the facts undergirding the inference to Jesus' resurrection are accepted by the wide majority of historical Jesus scholars today without any assumption as to the Gospels' inspiration or inerrancy, to wit,

On the Sunday after Jesus' crucifixion and his interment by Joseph of Arimathea, Jesus' tomb was discovered to be empty by a group of his female disciples, including Mary Magdalene.

Thereafter, various individuals and groups of people, including Peter, James, and the Twelve, experienced appearances of Jesus alive.

The original disciples suddenly and sincerely came to believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead, despite having strong predispositions to the contrary.

It can be argued, furthermore, that the best explanation of these facts is the one given by the original disciples: “God raised Jesus from the dead.”

Thus, the phenomena of Scripture require us, quite reasonably, to construe scriptural inerrancy in terms of Scripture’s truthfulness in all that it teaches, and we learn inductively what Scripture teaches by an examination of Scripture itself. Such an examination reveals that various facts of science, history, and so forth may not belong to the teaching of Scripture.

Now the worry arises that such a doctrine is almost meaningless, since one is always at liberty, when confronted with a demonstrable error in the text, to deny that it belongs to the teaching of Scripture.223 Of what use is such an unfalsifiable doctrine? While the worry is real, two things may be said in response. First, in some cases what Scripture teaches is evident wholly apart from considerations of its truth value. The resurrection of Jesus is the paramount case in point. As Dunn says, “As a historical statement we can say quite firmly: no Christianity without the resurrection of Jesus. As Jesus is the single great ‘presupposition’ of Christianity, so also is the resurrection of Jesus.”224 Second, falsifiability is at best relevant to the truth-assessment of a particular position (though not necessary even for that225), which is irrelevant to our concern, which is determining what Scripture teaches about itself, not determining whether what it teaches is true. Scripture teaches that it is inspired by God and therefore authoritative and therefore true in all that it teaches and therefore inerrant in all that it teaches. It is irrelevant at this point whether such a doctrine is falsifiable or even true. In deciding what Scripture teaches, we are interested only in understanding what a doctrine of inerrancy commits us to, and that

cannot be decided apart from an inductive examination of Scripture itself.226

As for the importance and utility of scriptural inerrancy, such a doctrine establishes a sort of default assumption for the Christian theologian of the truth of Scripture's assertions that can protect theology from doctrinal harm, just as the presumption of innocence until proven guilty serves to protect citizens in Western democracies from injustice. Some sort of persuasive argument will be required for convicting Scripture of falsehood in any given case, and the inerrantist may present defenses of Scripture's truth in that regard. Failing that, the inerrantist may deny that the falsehood belongs to the teaching of Scripture and marshal exegetical arguments in support. The problem of the truth of the doctrine will arise only in case some statement of Scripture belongs incontrovertibly to the teaching of Scripture and is demonstrably false.

3 Justification of Belief in Scriptural Inspiration

3.1 Prior Probability

As explained in our Prolegomenon, we are engaged, not in fundamental theology, which seeks to provide epistemic justification for belief in the inspiration of Scripture, but in systematic theology, which seeks to formulate and defend the coherence of the doctrinal content of Christian faith. Nonetheless, the question of the epistemic justification of belief in Scriptural inspiration is almost inevitable, as well as irresistible, for the philosophical theologian. Having repeatedly deferred the consideration of this question, let us now in this final section say something in response.

Swinburne, whose book Revelation is devoted to the question of the epistemic justification of a claim to propositional, divine revelation, rightly emphasizes that the successful identification of a purported propositional revelation from God is bolstered by the prior justification of a particular sort of theism. For if one has good reason to think that God exists and that Jesus is God incarnate, it will be much more probable that Jesus brought a propositional revelation from God than otherwise. Swinburne identifies three factors that increase the probability of a Christian revelation claim: (i) evidence for the existence of God; (ii) a priori reasons arising from God's nature that certain doctrines are true of him, such as reasons to think that God is triune and that he would become incarnate; and (iii) historical evidence relative to the historical claims of Christianity and in particular to the resurrection of Jesus.227

With respect to (i), in Volume IIb De Deo: Excursus on Natural Theology, I shall defend the existence of God on grounds such as the contingent existence of the universe, the absolute beginning of the universe, the fine-tuning of the universe for embodied, conscious agents, the applicability of mathematics to the physical phenomena of the universe, the objectivity of moral values and duties, and the very possibility of a maximally great being.228 I think that such evidence makes God's existence much more probable than not.

With respect to (ii), while I share most thinkers' skepticism about a priori arguments for the Trinity and incarnation, still Swinburne's general point remains that God's being a God of perfect goodness and love, such as is proved by the moral argument, increases considerably the probability that God should reveal himself to men. Swinburne mentions four sorts of things that would be very good for us to know but that we have not found out for ourselves and so are things that a good God might be expected to reveal to us. First, it would be good for us to know more about God's nature in order to interact properly with him. Swinburne's first reason seems quite plausible given God's personhood and love for human persons. Second, human beings have failed badly to do their moral duty to God and their fellow creatures and therefore it is good that God

should reveal to us what must be done to make things right. So stated, this reason is also eminently plausible. It is to say that God would reveal to us a plan of salvation to deal with human sin. We need not agree with Swinburne's specific claim that it is a priori likely that God would become incarnate in order to offer reparation to God on our behalf. As we shall see when we come to the locus De Christo, there are other plausible ways of God's dealing with sin than offering reparation along the lines of Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement. Whether we think that the incarnation is necessary to deal with human sin will depend on whether we consider retributive justice to be essential to God's nature. If it is, that would increase the probability of the incarnation and passion of Christ to deal with human sin. However, I see no a priori reason to agree with Swinburne that if God subjects us to serious suffering for a good cause, there is a duty on him to share that suffering and so to become incarnate. This strikes me as an astonishingly presumptuous claim, even if God has moral duties to fulfill, which I think he does not,229 for he could simply inform us via divine revelation that he has morally sufficient reasons for allowing our suffering without his becoming incarnate. Third, a revelation can provide encouragement to do what is good and avoid doing what is bad in the future. Again, we need not agree with Swinburne's speculations about the role of rewards and punishments in the afterlife to appreciate the more general point that a good and loving God could be expected to provide for us some sort of moral guidance about how to live. And, of course, if there is a heaven and hell, then God could certainly be expected to warn us about hell, if not to promise heaven. Fourth and finally, quite a lot of human wrongdoing is the result of ignorance as to which actions are good and which are bad, requiring a divine revelation. This fourth reason to expect a revelation is not significantly different from the third reason as I have cast it, unless we take the third to be about the need for warnings or promises. In sum, there are perhaps surprisingly strong a priori reasons grounded in the nature of God for expecting a propositional revelation from him.

There is an additional consideration only adumbrated by Swinburne that increases the probability of scriptural revelation, namely, the need for preservation of God's initial revelation and its continuing availability to mankind. In the absence of some record of the truths revealed by God to man, it would be necessary for God to continually reveal these truths to everyone at every time, which would turn the world into a haunted house. So Swinburne rightly insists, "If the revelation is to be public, it must consist of publicly accessible unwritten or (better) written traditions."230 That makes inscripturation of God's Word more probable.

With respect to factor (iii) above, miraculous attestation is one of four tests Swinburne proposes for assessing would-be revelations. The resurrection serves in Swinburne's scheme as a miraculous intervention into the natural order, which is reasonably interpreted as God's authentication of Christian revelation.231 Without denying that role, I suggest a somewhat different role for the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection to play. As Pannenberg has argued, God's raising Jesus from the dead is his vindication of Jesus' personal claim to speak and act with divine authority, so that it serves as evidence of his divinity and, hence, incarnation.232 Belief in the incarnation is thus based primarily on a posteriori reasons rather than a priori reasons. As we shall argue in the locus De Christo: Persona Christi, Jesus' resurrection shows that Jesus was who he claimed to be. In other words, the evidence that God raised Jesus from the dead shows that Christian theism is true–not a doctrinally full-blown Christian theism, of course, but a sort of mere Christian theism, such as comes to expression in I Cor 15.3–5 or I Tim 3.16. As Hodge and Warfield emphasized, such a mere Christian theism neither presupposes nor includes a doctrine of Scripture. Mere Christian theism does not depend upon inspired documents for its truth but merely upon sufficiently reliable, ordinary historical documents. But the probability of there being inspired Scripture is greatly increased if mere Christian theism, rather than just theism, is true.

Since another way of saying that the resurrection vindicates Jesus' personal claims is that the resurrection reveals who Jesus was, we come to see that propositional revelation from Jesus' lips is based in a self-revelation by God in Christ. God reveals himself in Christ in human history, and Jesus delivers verbal communication from God in his teaching. In that sense, revelation may be said to be prior to scriptural inspiration.233 So, in sum, if God exists, is by nature perfectly good and loving, and has revealed himself decisively in Jesus, as indicated by the evidence, then the probability of inspired Scripture is greater than it otherwise would have been. These considerations will make it easier to justify regarding Scripture as an objective revelation or communication from God.

3.2 The Holy Spirit's Witness

Concerning the grounds for accepting the Scriptures as the Word of God, the Westminster Confession 1.5 states:

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

The genius of this statement is its combinatorial approach to justification of belief in the inspiration of Scripture, which, by adducing multiple, independent reasons, increases the probability of its conclusion. Pride of place is given to the witness of the Holy Spirit

to Scripture's being God's infallible and authoritative Word. How are we best to understand this?

It might be thought that the Holy Spirit bears testimony to Scripture, testifying to us that it is God's Word. But phenomenologically that does not seem to be the best construal.234 More plausible is the view that Christians, around the world and for millennia, have the experience that God speaks to them through the Scriptures. They experience the Scriptures as God's Word to them.235 This phenomenon of "experiencing as," like the closely related phenomenon of "seeing that," is well-known in other contexts. For example, someone unfamiliar with the rules of baseball, may, like us, see a white ball hit over a fence, but he would not see that a home run has been hit. Someone may experience a trusted person's action as a betrayal, whereas an ignorant third person would not experience the same action in that way. Similarly, Christians may experience Scripture as God's Word. Its truth and authority are in turn an implication of its being God's Word.

On this account belief in Scripture as God's Word is what epistemologists call a properly basic belief, grounded in the experience of hearing Scripture as God's speaking.236 It is a basic belief because it is not inferred from other, more foundational, propositional beliefs. It is properly basic because it is appropriately grounded rather than simply arbitrary. Among contemporary epistemologists the rationality of such properly basic beliefs is, as we have seen, widely recognized.237 In the absence of some defeater, then, the belief that the Scriptures are God's Word may be epistemically justified. Debates over scriptural inerrancy are, in effect, disputes over whether there are successful defeaters of the belief that Scripture is God's Word and therefore truthful in all that it teaches. If it could be shown that Scripture teaches falsehood, then, given the tight linkage between inspiration and truthfulness, belief that Scripture is God's Word would suffer defeat. Time and space do not permit us to venture into such an exploration of ostensible defeaters; but, as we have seen, these will likely not concern such matters as historical and geographical details, scientific facts, dates,

numbers, ascriptions of authorship, unity of books, and the like, which are plausibly not part of the teaching of Scripture, so much as they will concern ethical challenges to scriptural teaching concerning matters of faith and practice. The rationality of belief that Scripture is God's Word will require a robust defense of Christian teaching by theologians and philosophers against such putative defeaters.

An obvious objection to this defense of scriptural inspiration is that adherents of rival revelations, such as the Qur'an and the Book of Mormon, could with equal justification claim that their scriptures are God's Word, since they, too, experience them as God's speaking to them. But, as Plantinga has pointed out, the Christian has no interest in claiming that adherents of other religions are irrational in their beliefs.238 Rationality, or epistemic justification, is just too easy to achieve for such an imperious procedure to be legitimate. Even voodoo epistemologists, Plantinga avers, may be justified in believing that they are both justified and even warranted in their beliefs. So there is just no point in pressing de jure as opposed to de facto objections to such religious beliefs.239 What the Christian theologian can and should claim is that there are, indeed, powerful de facto defeaters of Muslim and Mormon claims on behalf of their scriptures, such as the falsehood of the Qur'an's key teaching (4:157–158) that Jesus of Nazareth was neither crucified nor killed or Joseph Smith's teaching that God is a corporeal hominin living on another planet (Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith). By contrast the Christian believer has the considerable advantage that he has good reasons to think that Christian theism is in fact true, which makes his belief that God speaks through Scripture more plausible and natural than it would have otherwise been, just as my basic belief that my wife is talking to me on the phone is more plausible if I know that I have a wife. Indeed, the Christian theologian might well be warranted in claiming that his belief that Scripture is God's Word is not merely justified but warranted.240

Swinburne has criticized the Westminster Confession's appeal to the witness of the Holy Spirit:

Now if someone really does see something as overwhelmingly obvious, then indeed he ought to believe and live by what he 'sees'. But … it is very far from obvious how certain parts of the Bible are to be understood – we need a context to make the meaning of the sentences clear – and different readers to whom the truth of Scripture has seemed evident have understood it to mean very different things. Very few parts of the Bible seem to claim either 'self-evident' authority, or indeed even to be the immediate 'word of the Lord'. Rather, most parts of the Bible claim to provide grounds for belief about the acts and words of God, which are the true vehicles of revelation. And finally, of course, much of Scripture has not seemed self-evident to so many of its readers; argument is needed to show how it is to be understood, and why it is to be believed. Those to whom Scripture seems 'self-evident' are well advised to reflect on these facts before reaffirming their conviction that its truth needs no argument.241

Let us do as Swinburne advises and reflect on the several points he has made. First, it ought to be clear that the notion of self-evidence is a red herring. Not only is this notion not mentioned in the Westminster Confession, which speaks at most of our "full persuasion and assurance" of Scripture's truth and authority through the Spirit's inward work, but experiencing Scripture as God's Word in a properly basic way no more requires that such a belief be self-evident than testimonial, memory, and perceptual beliefs must be self-evident in order to be properly basic. The inspiration of Scripture need not and should not be understood along the lines of prophetic utterance as claiming to be "the word of the Lord" or to have self-evident authority. Second, a properly basic belief in Scripture as God's Word need not be indefeasible. As I have indicated, ostensible defeaters need themselves to be defeated if belief that Scripture is God's Word is to remain properly basic. So Swinburne leads us astray when he notes, "That we should believe what seems overwhelmingly obvious (despite a substantial amount of counter-evidence) follows from what I have called the Principle of

Credulity."242 We need not take our belief in Scripture as God's Word to be such an imagined intrinsic defeater-defeater. Third, Swinburne's hermeneutical concern about the interpretation of Scripture is a red herring. Of course, there are things in Scripture which are "hard to understand" (II Pet 3.16), but that does not detract from Scripture's status as God's Word. Again, just as memory and perceptual beliefs can sometimes be mistaken without beliefs of these types' ceasing to be properly basic, so people's misunderstandings of what God is saying though Scripture are compatible with our believing in a properly basic way that Scripture is God's Word. If Swinburne's appeal for "a context to make the meaning of the sentences clear" is, as seems likely, an appeal for the interpreting role of the Church, there is nothing in what we have said that excludes such a role. Finally, his claim that most parts of the Bible claim to provide grounds for belief about the acts and words of God, which are the true vehicles of revelation, constructs a false dichotomy. We have explained the polymorphous nature of biblical revelation, and God's revelation in acts and words prior to written expressions in no way excludes the latter from being inspired Scripture.243 In short, Swinburne's rejection of the justification of belief in Scripture's inspiration along the lines of the Westminster Confession is misconceived in multiple ways.

Elsewhere Swinburne argues that "we certainly need an internalist justification" for our religious beliefs if we are sensibly to use such beliefs to guide our lives.244 Swinburne explains that on an internalist view "a belief is justified if (and only if) it is rendered probable by all a believer's basic beliefs taken together."245 Now it follows immediately that on our account the Christian believer who experiences Scripture as God's Word is justified in his belief in scriptural inspiration, since that belief is one of and so probable on all his basic beliefs. Swinburne acknowledges that if one has "an overwhelming religious experience on reading Scripture" that a certain Christian doctrine is true, then one is justified in believing it.246 But I see no reason to think that the experience of sensing God's speaking though Scripture need be overwhelming if belief in

Scripture's inspiration is to be justified. Swinburne thinks that in our day and age "relatively few people reading Scripture have experiences of the truth of Christian doctrines."247 For what it is worth, I find precisely the opposite to be true; but in any case belief in a doctrine such as Swinburne has in mind (e.g., the Trinity) is a very different matter than the belief that Scripture is God's Word, which is far less theoretical and much closer to experience, namely, the experience of sensing God's speaking as one reads Scripture. Moreover, Swinburne counts as evidence "the extent to which different interpretations have been authenticated by the church." The belief that Scripture is God's Word has been universally affirmed by the Church since the beginning, so that even if one does not hear God's voice upon reading a particular passage, one's belief in its inspiration may be made plausible by reflecting on the experience of so many fellow Christians. So it seems that an internalist justification for belief in scriptural inspiration need not appeal to historical evidences, as Swinburne thinks.

Swinburne proceeds to criticize externalists who maintain that "what makes a belief in the authority of Scripture justified is that our belief… is produced by the right God-created process, and not (as such) by any argument from historical evidence or even from some overwhelming experience of the truth of that authority."248 Now already it seems that Swinburne has again drawn the noose too tight. Someone who experiences Scripture as God's Word and so believes in scriptural inspiration in a properly basic way may not be aware that his belief is the product of the Holy Spirit's inward work and may agree that his experience is not overwhelming; but there is no reason that he must therefore deny that such a belief may also be warranted by historical argument. Be that as it may, Swinburne agrees that if Plantinga's epistemological model is correct, then our Christian beliefs will be warranted and true. "But," he cautions:

before we rely on them for this reason, we need reason to suppose that they are appropriately warranted; and that means having a belief

that they are probably (on our evidence) thus warranted. That is, before we rely on them for the stated reason, we need an internally justified belief that our Christian beliefs are caused in the way in which Plantinga claims that they are–that is, by the 'internal instigation of the Holy Spirit' leading to our having relevant true beliefs.249

It seems to me that this critique is inapplicable to the case at hand. Yes, in order to rely on the belief that the Scriptures are inspired by God we need a reason to suppose that this belief is warranted. But that does not imply that we need an internally justified belief that our belief in scriptural inspiration is caused by the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. Some believers may never have even heard that there is a Holy Spirit (Acts 19.2). It is enough that we experience the Scripture as God's Word. Our belief is thus grounded in experience and so is properly basic and thus rational, perhaps even warranted. Moreover, on the account given here, the believer who experiences Scripture as God's Word already knows that Christian theism is true on the basis of all the internalist justifications offered previously by Swinburne as background information–the question that remains is his attitude toward Scripture. Is it God's Word?

In one of the very few philosophical treatments of the question before us, Thomas Crisp explores various accounts of what makes Christian belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible epistemically justified.250 An important working assumption of Crisp's paper is that most Christians justifiably believe that the Bible is divinely inspired. This assumption is hugely significant because it rules out at once all accounts that require a predominantly literate and educated Christian population down through history with sufficient leisure time and resources to explore the sorts of evidence for scriptural inspiration envisioned by Swinburne. So Crisp brushes aside accounts of that sort: "Of course, it could be that… relatively few Christians are justified in believing the Bible to be divinely inspired. It could be, but I am assuming it's not."251 This is, I think, far too quick. Even if almost every Christian is justified in believing in mere Christian theism on the basis of the witness of the Holy Spirit, that

does not rule out the fact that only a minority may be justified in believing in the inspiration of the Bible. This should not be ruled out merely by assumption.

This same assumption comes to play an unexpected role when it comes to the third option that Crisp considers, namely, that the Holy Spirit produces in believers the belief that the Bible is divinely inspired (or something in the near neighborhood). For what, he asks, is the Bible? There is the Catholic Bible, the Greek Orthodox Bible, the Protestant Bible, the Ethiopian Orthodox Bible, the Armenian Orthodox Bible, and so on. “It looks as if no one proposition uncontroversially answers to the definite description ‘the proposition that the Bible is divinely inspired’ on account of the fact that no one book uncontroversially answers to the name ‘the Bible.’”252 So, for example, suppose that the Holy Spirit bears witness to some Ethiopian Orthodox Christian that that the Ethiopian Orthodox Bible is divinely inspired. Then he would be justified in his belief. But now two worries arise.

First, Crisp worries that it is hard to see how such an account could be extended to explain how most Christians get justified belief that the Scriptures are inspired. Presumably, the problem is that if the Holy Spirit bears witness to the biblical canon of Ethiopian Orthodoxy, then the experiences of Christians of other confessions that their different Bibles are God’s Word must be non-veridical and, hence, their beliefs in that regard false.

This worry, however, confuses justification with warrant. Crisp is concerned in his article with epistemic justification, not warrant, and it is possible to be justified in holding false beliefs. The scenario he imagines is analogous to the situation we mentioned earlier concerning adherents of other world religions who claim to experience their scriptures as divinely inspired. While one may acknowledge the rationality of their beliefs (apart from consideration of defeaters), still those beliefs are false. So here: even if the beliefs of Catholics, Orthodox, and others that their respective Bibles are

God’s Word are false, they may still be justified in holding such beliefs.

Moreover, Crisp’s worry is surely exaggerated. What he fails to mention is that all the confessions he lists hold to the identical NT canon. The experience of Christians of these books as God’s Word is consistent, so that its veridicality is unchallenged by their diverse beliefs about certain OT books.253 Even if Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, for example, are mistaken in including I Enoch in the OT canon, that does nothing to affect the veridicality of their experience of the NT books as God’s Word. Indeed, I doubt that any Christian considers the Holy Spirit’s witness on behalf of I Enoch to be comparable to his witness on behalf of the Gospel of Matthew. Plausibly I Enoch is something of a free rider which on the basis of tradition piggybacks on genuinely inspired books. But let that pass; the salient point is that all Christians can be so far forth, not merely justified, but warranted on the basis of experience in believing that the books of the NT (not to mention undisputed books of the OT) are divinely inspired.

Second, Crisp worries that this account posits diverse explanations of what would seem phenomenologically to be very similar experiences. It is theoretically better to give a unified explanation of similar phenomena. The worry here is that even though Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, and others similarly experience their different Bibles as God’s Word, one must say that the experience of only one group is veridical. It would be better theoretically to say that they are either all similarly veridical or non-veridical.

Now I doubt that Crisp is in a position to say justifiably that all these experiences are phenomenologically similar. Indeed, I should say that even within a single canon, Christians experience different books to different degrees as God’s Word. I, at least, have no idea of the degree to which an Ethiopian Christian experiences I Enoch as God’s Word or a Catholic Christian Bel and the Dragon. Moreover, Crisp’s second worry does not, in fact, preclude regarding all these experiences as veridical. One might think at first blush that such an

affirmation leads to incoherence, since the different canons are mutually incompatible. But such an inference arises only if we take the Holy Spirit's witness (as Crisp does254) to be to the extent of the canon. But there is no reason to think that the extent of the canon belongs to "the great things of the Gospel" to which the Spirit bears witness.255 More plausibly, Christians experience Scripture as God's Word. Since the most capacious canon includes all the rest, theoretically the experience of every Christian could be veridical.

But, again, let that pass. The important point is, once more, that since all these various confessions hold to the identical NT canon, Christians' phenomenologically similar experiences of the NT books as God's Word can be veridical. This is not to say that the Holy Spirit testifies to the limits of the NT canon, but that Christians of all sorts experience the canonical NT books as God's Word.256

It seems, therefore, that one way in which belief in the inspiration of Scripture may be justified for Christians is on the basis of our experiencing the Scriptures, especially the NT books, as God's Word.

3.3 The Witness of History

Taking belief in scriptural inspiration to be a properly basic belief grounded in our experiencing Scripture as God's Word does not preclude our also making a historical case for the inspiration of Scripture along the lines envisioned by Hodge and Warfield. Taking as one's point of departure a sort of mere Christian theism, one appeals first and foremost to the authoritative teachings of the historical Jesus to warrant belief that Scripture is God's Word. Such a case can be seen as confirmatory of the Spirit's witness, as the Westminster divines implied.

We laid out earlier a case that the canonical Jesus regarded the Jewish Scriptures as given by the Holy Spirit and therefore as authoritative in all that they teach. The question must now be taken

up whether the historical Jesus had such an attitude.257 It is highly probable that he did, for such a view of the Jewish Scriptures was common coin in Second Temple Judaism. Even so unsympathetic a critic as James Barr says that if the argument concerns the authoritative position exercised by the OT in the minds of Jesus and the early church, then:

> the argument would be right but also for critical scholars would be unnecessary. They know perfectly well the vital and central status that the Old Testament held in the minds of Jews of the time, as of early Christians, and the fundamentalist appeal to an inerrant Bible as a guarantee of this is quite unnecessary, since the facts would be granted without any such appeal.258

There is some confusion here: the “fundamentalist” does not appeal to an inerrant Bible to guarantee the fact of the vital and central status of the OT in the minds of Jews and Christians of that time. Quite the reverse, one appeals to the uncontested fact of the Jewish attitude toward their Scriptures at that time in order to make it plausible that Jesus similarly esteemed the Jewish Scriptures, so that this element of the Gospels’ portrait of Jesus is indisputably authentic.259

Josephus, for example, bears witness to the typical attitude of contemporary Jews toward their Scriptures, commenting:

> It therefore naturally, or rather necessarily, follows (seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written; seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege, obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred)–it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited, are but two and

twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. This period falls only a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.

From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.

We have given practical proof of our reverence for our own Scriptures. For, although such long ages have now passed, no one has ventured either to add, or to remove, or to alter a syllable; and it is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard them as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them. Time and again ere now the sight has been witnessed of prisoners enduring tortures and death in every form in the theatres, rather than utter a single word against the laws and the allied documents (Contra Apion 1.37–43).260

Noteworthy in this testimony is that the 22 books of the Jewish Scriptures are attributed to divine inspiration [kata tēn epinoian tēn apo tou theou] delivered via prophets;261 once the prophetic line failed, histories recorded after that time, however accurate, do not possess the authority of the earlier books. The inspired books alone are said to be justly accredited [ta dikaiōs pepisteumena] and to be divine decrees or doctrines [theou dogmata]. Therefore nothing can be added to or subtracted from them. They are reliable and do not contradict one another in any way. One can confidently stake one’s life upon them.

The portrait of Jesus in the Gospels is fully in accord with this typical Jewish attitude. In the Gospels, Jesus cites almost every book of the Jewish Scriptures referenced by Josephus and never cites any of the

apocryphal books, not to mention pseudepigraphal books, included in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, despite their presence in the Septuagint.262 Jesus and his detractors disagreed vehemently about the proper interpretation of the Scriptures, especially regarding his person, but they agreed about Scripture's truthfulness and authority. There is never an accusation brought against Jesus that he denied the authority and truthfulness of the sacred Scriptures. It is therefore highly likely that the Gospels accurately represent the attitude of the historical Jesus toward the Jewish Scriptures.

The question now becomes the one raised by Barr: Do Jesus' statements on Scripture belong to his teaching or are they adventitious to it? Barr reminds us:

The high status that the Old Testament holds in the minds of Jesus and the early Christians will be granted by the most critical as a matter of historical fact, and therefore the fundamentalist efforts to prove that are of no importance. On the other hand, the fundamentalist attempts to argue that these sayings of Jesus and the New Testament writers about Jonah, Daniel, Moses, and other persons and events prove the historical accuracy of the Old Testament are futile because they make no attempt is to show that Jesus or the early Christians were interested in such questions as the authorship of books, the presence of sources, or the historical accuracy of data and figures.263

Similarly, we should be skeptical of overly easy proofs of historicity based upon NT citation of OT passages.264 Many scholars have rightly distinguished between a literary person and a historical person, for example, the literary Adam and the historical Adam. The literary Adam is a character in a story, specifically the stories of Genesis 2–3. The historical Adam is the person, if such there be, who actually existed, the actual individual that the stories are allegedly about. Jesus and NT authors may and do appeal to various literary persons as illustrations in their teaching without necessarily intending to teach the historicity of the person involved.265

Could it be that the inspiration and authority of Scripture are no more part of Jesus' teaching than the authorship of the Pentateuch or the number of horses in Solomon's stables? Such a claim seems very implausible. It should be borne in mind that Jesus' teaching comprises not merely his explicit statements but also their entailments. To illustrate, Jesus is never recorded to have taught explicitly that God exists or that people are sinful, but those affirmations are entailed by what he did teach (e.g., "No one is good but God alone" [Mk 10.18]; "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" [Lk 5.32]). The foundation of Jesus' teaching was the authoritative Scriptures in which he was steeped and to which he appealed again and again. Remove this foundation and Jesus' teachings would become unintelligible.266 True, he might still teach things on his own authority (more on that momentarily), but so much of what he taught was based upon his reading of the Jewish Scriptures that, were he wrong about their authority and truthfulness, his own teaching would in fact prove to be baseless. While the falsity of shared Jewish assumptions as to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch or Davidic authorship of the Psalms would not affect the veracity of Jesus' teaching on various subjects, the falsity of the shared conviction as to the divine authority of the Scriptures would be devastating. Thus, the inspiration and authority of the Jewish Scriptures is an entailment of Jesus' teachings.

Moreover, on occasion Jesus did seem to teach explicitly concerning sacred Scripture. For example, he famously said:

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mt 5.17–19).

This logion is programmatic for the Sermon on the Mount with its sharp antitheses contrasting Jesus' teachings and what the people have heard of the teaching of the law. It is likely an authentic word of Jesus, given its apparent collision with early Christian relaxation of the demands of the law upon Christ-followers. It is one of the most important sayings for the so-called "Jewish reclamation of Jesus."267 Mt 5.18 has a Synoptic parallel (Lk 16.17). However difficult the saying may be to integrate with the rest of Jesus' teachings, Jesus here clearly teaches an extraordinarily high view of the Jewish Scriptures ("the law and the prophets").

Moreover, we have the curious exchange in Jn 10.34–36:

The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.' Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, "I said, you are gods"? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken), do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God"?' (Jn 10.33–36)

The setting is winter, and Jesus is walking in a colonnaded area of the Temple precincts known as Solomon's Porch during the extra-biblical feast of Hannukah. At this feast Jews celebrated the Maccabean heroes for liberating Israel from Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who had claimed to be a god and was followed in his blasphemy by certain apostate Jews. After his defiling the Temple, a new altar had to be consecrated. Although the Christology of the passage is more explicit than in the Synoptics, the argument between Jesus and his opponents both fits such a Jewish historical context and exemplifies Jewish style of argumentation. Craig Keener reports, "scholars frequently recognize that in this passage Jesus employs a familiar form of reasoning (qal vaomer)," which appears throughout Tannaitic literature, the Tosefta, Melkita, Sipra Leviticus, Sipre on Numbers, and Sipre on Deuteronomy.268 "Jesus uses such a 'how-much-more' sort of argument in reasoning that, if Scripture as God's word

called Israel (or other humans or others besides the true God) gods on their interpretation, then how could they protest if Jesus called himself God's son…?"269 Jesus' argument hangs on the authority of Scripture, and the parenthetical comment directly–and unnecessarily–makes that point explicitly. Jesus is refusing to let Scripture be annulled or broken of its force; its authority is binding.270 Jesus' additional comment does not reflect a theological interest or Tendenz of the Fourth Evangelist but is more appropriately attributed to the historical Jesus.

Finally, consider Jesus' conviction, oft expressed, that the Scriptures about him must be fulfilled. The historical Jesus very plausibly foresaw, predicted, and even provoked his own death.271 He taught that he would die just as the Scriptures had predicted (Mk 8.1; 9.31; 10.33–34 and parall.). As surely, then, as the historical Jesus held to a high view of the Jewish Scriptures, to a similar degree does that conviction belong to the teaching of Jesus.

The next step in our argument is to note the extraordinary authority claimed by Jesus himself. Again, it is widely acknowledged by historical Jesus scholars that Jesus of Nazareth acted and spoke with an unprecedented sense of divine authority. In sayings such as the antitheses of his Sermon on the Mount and in his activity as a miracle-healer and exorcist, Jesus' sense of personal, divine authority came to clear expression, wholly apart from his use of exalted Christological titles. For the present, we content ourselves with the summary of Horst Georg Pöhlmann in his Abriss der Dogmatik: "In summary, one could say that today there is virtually a consensus concerning that wherein the historical in Jesus is to be seen. It consists in the fact that Jesus came on the scene with an unheard of authority, namely with the authority of God, with the claim of the authority to stand in God's place and speak to us and bring us to salvation."272

This claim to authority, by which Jesus put himself in God's place, was, of course, blasphemous in Jewish ears. God's raising Jesus from the dead, which, it will be remembered, we presuppose, is

God’s public and unequivocal vindication of Jesus’ allegedly blasphemous claims. As Pannenberg explains:

The resurrection of Jesus acquires such decisive meaning, not merely because someone or anyone has been raised from the dead, but because it is Jesus of Nazareth, whose execution was instigated by the Jews because he had blasphemed against God. If this man was raised from the dead, then that plainly means that the God whom he had supposedly blasphemed has committed himself to him… . The resurrection can only be understood as the divine vindication of the man whom the Jews had rejected as a blasphemer.273

If God has legitimated Jesus’ claim to divine authority, then he has legitimated the authority of Jesus’ teaching. Therefore, we are justified in believing what Jesus taught concerning the Jewish Scriptures, that they are God’s Word.

So far we have been able to proceed on very firm ground. Can we extend our case to writings contained in the NT? First, we should note that Jesus’ bestowal of his divine authority to his apostles is likewise very firmly grounded historically. In a painstaking analysis of the NT evidence for the existence of the Twelve appointed by Jesus during his ministry and the nature and function of this select group, John Meier argues on the basis of such criteria as (1) multiple attestation of sources (Mark, Luke’s special source L, John, Q, and Paul) and forms (narrative [Mark, John], logia [Q, John], catalogue-like list [Mark, L], and creedal formula [I Cor 15.3–5]); (2) embarrassment at the betrayal of Jesus by “one of the Twelve”; and (3) the general trajectory of the historical tradition concerning the Twelve, which crests during Jesus’ ministry, continues during the earliest days of the church, and then subsides thereafter, that the Twelve were a special group of disciples chosen by Jesus during his public ministry.274 Meier argues further, on grounds of multiple attestation (Mark, Q) and coherence, for the historicity of Jesus’ aforementioned sending out of the Twelve on mission, which

symbolized the regathering of the twelve tribes of Israel with the coming of God's Kingdom.275 Meier notes that "Jesus presented himself as the eschatological prophet sent by God to Israel – an Israelite prophet being by definition a person sent by God to speak God's word to God's people… . the physical, literal following of this itinerant prophet-preacher-teacher flowed naturally into sharing his itinerant mission to Israel."276 Hence, "it is quite probable … that, sometime during his ministry (perhaps more than once?), Jesus sent out disciples on a brief and urgent mission to Israel, after having given them instructions similar to those we find in the Gospels' missionary discourses."277 In sending out the Twelve on such a mission, Jesus must have invested the disciples with his authority to proclaim the prophetic message of the Kingdom and to heal and exorcise those who were afflicted.

Perhaps the most interesting saying of Jesus concerning his twelve disciples' role in the coming Kingdom is the logion attested in Q: "Truly, I say to you, in the new world … you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19.28; cf. Lk 22.28–30). The saying is likely to be authentic, not only because it seems to envision an earthly kingdom which did not immediately materialize, but also because of the awkwardness of envisioning a throne for Judas Iscariot, who was known to have apostatized.278 The authenticity of the saying reveals that Jesus envisioned a role for the Twelve that extended beyond his public ministry. The theme of Jesus' commissioning the twelve disciples to carry the Gospel message, not just to Israel, but beyond its borders to the Gentile world is multiply attested in the Gospels and Acts (Mt 28.18–20; Mk 13.10; Lk 24.44–49; Jn 20.21–23; Acts 1.8; cf. longer ending to Mark 16.15). Moreover, this theme coheres with Jesus' self-understanding as the Isaianic Servant of the Lord who would be a light to the Gentiles (Mk 14.22–24; cf. Is 42.6; 49.6; 52.10).279 Although the role of the Twelve as a group diminished in the church with the spread of the Gentile mission, we must not miss the continuing veneration in the church of the original founding group of twelve disciples who had followed Jesus during his earthly life. This

high esteem is evident in the ongoing use of the very early formula passed on by Paul to his Corinthian converts sometime around 50–51: “then he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve” (I Cor 15.5). That Paul still cites this tradition some twenty years after its formulation shows the appreciation of the Twelve’s founding role in the church even among those who had no contact with them. If sayings like Mt 16.18–19 and the Johannine discourse promising the disciples’ remembrance via the Holy Spirit of Jesus’ words are deemed inauthentic, that fact would support all the more the church’s consciousness of the apostles’ role in preserving and interpreting the Jesus tradition. Later still, John’s apocalypse presents the striking image of the new Jerusalem on whose foundations are engraved the enduring names of the Twelve.

Concerns about authenticity evaporate when we come to consider Paul’s statements in his undisputed letters about his apostolic authority. When Paul speaks of his authority as an apostle, he is not speaking of an apostle in the widest sense of a Christian missionary, for such a sense would be too weak for the apostles to be ranked alongside of and even above prophets, who delivered revelations from the Lord. Rather Paul is speaking of the authority enjoyed by the Twelve, for he like them had also seen and been commissioned by the Risen Lord (Gal 1.1, 11–12, 15–19; 2.6–10). Like the Lord’s brother James, Paul enjoyed a status and authority comparable to that of the Twelve. Moreover, what we have already said about the authority in the early church of the Jesus tradition preserved by the apostles stands firm.

The evidence we previously reviewed shows that the written records of the Jesus traditions in the form of the Gospels as well as a collection of Paul’s letters came to be regarded as Scripture amazingly early, no later than sometime around 80. These documents of the NT, at least, were taken to share in the inspiration and authority of OT Scripture. Given Jesus’ divine status as God’s Anointed and his care to equip a select body of disciples to carry forward his teaching beyond his death, it is reasonable to think that the apostles’ sense of divine authority, recognized by the early

church, was not a delusion of grandeur on their part but represented a correct appraisal of the responsibility and prerogative entrusted to them by Jesus. Their writings may therefore be justifiably regarded as authoritative Scripture, as they in fact were.

How should we assess the force of this argument? “Insufficient” is the verdict of Crisp. He presents an “undermining objection” against a similar argument of Swinburne on behalf of belief in Christian revelation. The springboard for Crisp’s objection is an earlier objection to Swinburne’s historical argument for Jesus’ resurrection dubbed “the problem of dwindling probabilities” by Alvin Plantinga.280

Plantinga explains that an explanatory hypothesis like “God raised Jesus from the dead” is not just a single hypothesis. Rather one is also supposing that God exists, that God would want to reveal himself in the world, that Jesus of Nazareth lived and made certain radical claims about himself, as well as that God raised him from the dead to vindicate those radical claims. This is really a series of hypotheses. So suppose we want to calculate the probability of these hypotheses given the specific evidence and background information. First of all, we need to estimate the probability that God exists. After that we should need to estimate the probability that God would want to reveal himself in the world. Then additionally we should need to calculate the probability that Jesus lived and made certain radical claims about himself. Finally, we should need to figure in addition to these hypotheses the probability that God raised Jesus from the dead. The probability that all of these hypotheses are true is the product of all of the probabilities multiplied together. Plantinga points out even if each one of these hypotheses has a very high probability – say, 90% – nevertheless as we multiply these probabilities together, the probability that they are all true dwindles. For $0.9 \times 0.9 \times 0.9 \times 0.9 = 0.66$. The probability gets progressively smaller until finally it may turn out that we actually get to less than 50%. The probability may turn out to be very small. As a result, the hypothesis of Jesus’ resurrection on the historical evidence may turn

out to be not very probable at all. So Plantinga thinks that we should not base our belief in Jesus' resurrection on historical evidence.

Now prima facie, there has got to be something the matter with this objection. For the objection would undercut not merely belief in the resurrection of Jesus; it would make it impossible to believe almost anything in history or science that is based upon a similar series of hypotheses. Consider an example from contemporary astrophysics. In the constellation Cygnus, there is an object that astronomers call Cygnus X-1. Based upon the scientific evidence most astronomers think that it is very probable that Cygnus X-1 is a black hole. Now think about that hypothesis in terms of Plantinga's problem of dwindling probabilities. The hypothesis is based first of all upon the probability of the so-called Copernican Principle, the principle that we occupy no special place in the universe. This Principle implies that the laws of nature that we experience are the same laws of nature that hold in the constellation Cygnus. If Cygnus' laws of nature were significantly different than our laws of nature, we could not draw any kind of conclusion about Cygnus X-1. Second, we have to consider the probability of the General Theory of Relativity, since it is on the basis of this gravitational theory that black holes are predicted. Third, there is the probability that the x-ray eclipse that we observe in Cygnus X-1 is due to a companion object that is rotating around X-1 – another stellar object in this binary system that helps us to identify X-1. Fourth, we have to hypothesize on the basis of the orbit of this companion object that X-1 has a mass of around three to four times the sun. Fifth, based upon the flickering x-rays that are emitted from X-1, we have to hypothesize that the size of X-1 is about nine miles in diameter. Finally, we have to consider the probability that there is no other object that could cause these phenomena – for example, a neutron star, which is a stellar object which is highly compacted but is not a black hole. Even if every one of these hypotheses had a 90% probability, the overall probability would soon dwindle in exactly the way Plantinga imagines, so that no scientist could ever reasonably conclude that Cygnus X-1 is probably a black hole. And yet most astronomers do think that it is

probably a black hole. There has got to be something wrong with Plantinga's argument or it would undermine both scientific and historical reasoning.

Fortunately, Timothy McGrew has pointed out what the fallacy is.281 The problem is that Plantinga mistakenly holds the evidence constant while he refines the hypothesis. But that incorrectly captures the argument. When someone says that the probability of the existence of God is 90% given the evidence, he is talking about just the evidence that is relevant to God's existence. None of the theistic arguments I have elsewhere defended based on evidence for the origin of the universe or the fine-tuning of the universe for intelligent life or objective moral values in the world or the applicability of mathematics to physical phenomena, appeals to evidence about Jesus or the Gospels. They appeal to certain general facts of experience such as moral facts or facts about the origin of the universe, and so forth. When we then estimate the probability that God exists and that he would want to reveal himself, we augment that initial evidence with additional evidence drawn from the nature of God as a perfectly good and loving being. Similarly, when we ask what the probability is that God exists and would want to reveal himself and Jesus existed, then we add yet more evidence, this time of a historical nature. As long as more evidence is added as new hypotheses are considered, it does not matter that the hypothesis is being further and further refined. Plantinga's mistake was thinking that the evidence is held constant as additional hypotheses are considered. That misrepresents the argument. As the evidence accumulates, the probability of the conjunction of the hypotheses can actually increase. Given the additional evidence, the probability that God has raised Jesus from the dead could actually be greater than the probability that God exists on the evidence of natural theology because we have added in all the extra evidence pertinent to the further hypotheses. Therefore, Plantinga's objection based upon dwindling probabilities turns out to be misconceived.

Crisp nonetheless argues that "a close cousin" of the problem of dwindling probabilities will afflict any attempt to argue for the divine

inspiration of the Bible on historical grounds. Crisp assumes that the point of any historical argument is to show that some conclusion C is probable by putting forward certain premises whose conjunction is probable on the evidence. Following McGrew, Crisp explains that the probability of C will vary as one traces different pathways through a lattice of propositions correlated with different truth values of the premises. The probability of C is equal to the probability of the sum of all the probabilities of the conjunctions of C and the propositions along each pathway. Ignoring the pathway through the lattice along which each of the premises is false, Crisp says that in order to have "a good argument" to C from the premises, we must show that the sum of the probabilities along the pathways favorable to C is high.282 One's argument is subject to an undermining objection if one can show that we should withhold (or deny) belief that the sum of the probabilities along the pathways favorable to the premises is high.283 Such an undermining objection might show either that (i) the sum of the relevant probabilities is low on account of the sort of dwindling discussed by Plantinga, (ii) the sum of the relevant probabilities is inscrutable in the sense that one cannot tell what it is, or (iii) the sum of the relevant probabilities lies within an interval with a low lower bound and an inscrutable upper bound. If any of these alternatives can be shown to be the case, then one's argument is "no good."284

Now immediately misgivings arise about Crisp's characterization of a good argument, especially a good historical argument. One can state with confidence that professional historians do not, like Crisp, approach historical argument along the lines of the probability calculus. Rather, as Behan McCullagh explains, historians weigh historical hypotheses by means of criteria such as explanatory power, explanatory scope, degree of ad hoc-ness, and so on, in order to determine the best explanation of a body of historical facts.285 The inability of the historian (or scientist) to construct a probability argument such as Crisp envisions would not stymie sound historical (or scientific) judgements. Moreover, as McGrew points out, there is no reason to dismiss arguments that fail to

establish their conclusions to be more probable than not as “no good,” as Crisp does.286 In a cumulative case argument, the cumulative force of independent arguments whose conclusions are established to probabilities like 35%, 17%, and 8% may establish the probability of the overall conclusion to well over 50%. Finally, since the sums of the probabilities on pathways through a lattice may be inscrutable, what matters most is the sum of the probabilities along the path on which all the premises are true. In a deductive argument, the probability of the conclusion is not equal to the probability of the conjunction of the premises; rather the probability of the conjunction of the premises sets a lower bound to the probability of the conclusion. The probability of the conclusion could actually be much higher, but it cannot be any lower than the probability of the conjoined premises. If the combined premises of a valid deductive argument have a probability >50%, then the probability of the conclusion is guaranteed to be at the very least >50%. But even in cases in which it is <50%, that probability is but a lower bound, and the argument may rightly impress us as quite persuasive. It would be inappropriate to dismiss the argument as “no good.” An argument for scriptural inspiration need not demonstrate its conclusion to be highly probable in order to be of significant value.

To press on, Crisp argues that the strongest case from the deliverances of natural theology and history on behalf of the inspiration of the Bible will rely on premises such as the following:

T. God exists.

A. God intervenes in history to provide a propositional revelation about himself.

B. Jesus’ teachings were such that they could be plausibly interpreted as implying that he intended to found a church that would function for a long period time [sic] as an authoritative source of information about him.

C. Jesus rose from the dead.

D. In raising Jesus from the dead, God declared his approval of Jesus' teachings.

E. The Church that, by the start of the fifth century, had pronounced on which books were divinely inspired, is a legitimate successor of the church founded by Jesus.

Crisp seeks to undermine this argument by questioning how probable T is on our background information K. That will depend on what evidence is included in K. McGrew thinks that it is extremely high if K includes historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection.287 Crisp demurs. He sees no reason for thinking it much higher than the probability of theism on the reduced evidence of natural theology alone.288 This is important because such a minimal theism is a strictly logically weaker claim entailed by the claim that God raised Jesus from the dead.289 In any given probability distribution, the probability of the strictly weaker claim sets an upper bound on the probability of the strictly stronger claim. Therefore, if the resurrection hypothesis has a merely modest probability given the total evidence, then the probability of minimal theism must be even lower on that same evidence. Crisp's objection is based on what he deems to be the near inscrutability (or weakness) of the likelihood ratio comparing the probability of the evidence for the resurrection given theism to the probability of that evidence given the negation of theism:

StartFraction probability left-parenthesis e v i d e n c e f o r upper J e s u s normal single-comma-quotation-mark r e s u r r e c t i o n vertical-bar t h e i s m right-parenthesis Over probability left-parenthesis e v i d e n c e f o r upper J e s u s normal single-comma-quotation-mark r e s u r r e c t i o n vertical-bar a t h e i s m right-parenthesis EndFraction

Is it more probable that there would be the evidence of the sort we have for the resurrection if theism rather than atheism were true? Crisp's answer is, "Hard to say. Minimal theism says there is some god or other, some powerful non-physical person, but tells us almost nothing about this being."290 So it is hard to see, he thinks, why

minimal theism should generate any expectation that we should see something like evidence of the empty tomb, the post-mortem appearances, and so forth, something we should expect not to see given the denial of minimal theism.

In response to Crisp, Lydia McGrew charges that Crisp is badly mistaken to imply that it is required for us to expect evidence E given some hypothesis H in order for E to favor H heavily.291 Rather, we should consider the likelihood ratio as a whole rather than its numerator and denominator separately. We should not assume that the only way to estimate the ratio is to estimate its parts separately, rather than assessing the approximate magnitude of the ratio as a whole. Because we are considering a ratio, the Bayes factor can be huge—many orders of magnitude greater on the top than on the bottom—without having a numerator that is particularly high in any absolute sense. As Swinburne points out, even if the probability of the evidence for the resurrection is low on minimal theism, it is exponentially lower if there is no god-like being of any sort.292 Swinburne assigns a value of 100:1 to this ratio. I should say that this is absurdly conservative. I think that McGrew is quite correct in considering the probability of the evidence for Jesus' resurrection given only naturalistic explanations to be "almost inexpressibly low."293 Crisp asks why the ratio might not be a mere 5:1 or 2:1. The answer is presumably that if there is no god of any sort, then no sufficient cause can be plausibly assigned to the relevant events, whereas if there is a transcendent Creator and Designer of the universe who is the paradigm of goodness, then these events can be given a ready cause. McGrew complains that Crisp has nothing to say at this point about the improbability of the evidence for the resurrection if minimal theism is false. In reply to Swinburne, she points out, Crisp ignores the fact that the denominator of the ratio is very low as well as any insight that the lowness of the denominator might give concerning the overall size of the ratio and goes straight for the difficulty he sees in estimating the numerator all by itself. The weight of his objection lies entirely on the difficulty of judging the probability of the numerator alone. McGrew rightly concludes, "It isn't

necessary to have a specific probability of the evidence on theism to see that the existence of a deity is a game-changer as far as the probability of a miracle like the resurrection."294 Now if the ratio in question is, indeed, significantly top-heavy, Crisp's claim that the probability of theism on the total evidence is insufficiently high to support the argument for biblical inspiration collapses.

Moreover, what about the formulation of the argument for scriptural inspiration itself? Crisp acknowledges that this way of arguing for the inspiration of the Bible is inspired by Swinburne's argument for the central claims of Christianity. In so formulating the case for biblical inspiration, Crisp has overlooked the fact that Swinburne has no interest in making a case for biblical inspiration, since for him the Scriptures are not revelation, but merely the human witness to it. Swinburne's interest is in making a case for divine revelation, which for him is Christian doctrine as elaborated by the Church; hence, the interest in the Church that comes to expression in B and E.

A simpler and more relevant case for scriptural inspiration might rely on premises such as the following:

God exists.

God raised Jesus from the dead.

If God raised Jesus from the dead, God ratified Jesus' teachings.

Jesus' teachings were such that they could be plausibly interpreted to imply the inspiration of Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Such an argument will be less susceptible to undermining or dwindling probability arguments. The proper way to assess the probability of the conjunction of (1–4) is to consider (1) on its relevant evidence base, then to add additional evidence relevant to (2) before assessing the probability of their conjunction, and so on, until we arrive at the probability of the conjunction of (1–4) on the total evidence. Even then, that sets merely a lower probability bound

for the conclusion that God has ratified the inspiration of Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Crisp insists that even if one adopts such an approach based on Bayesian conditionalization, still the probability of scriptural inspiration (SI) on the total evidence (TE) is given by

X. Pr (SI|TE) ≥ Pr (SI|1&2&3&4&TE) × Pr (1|TE) × Pr (2|1&TE) × Pr (3/1&2&TE) × Pr (4/1&2&3&TE).295

In that case, Crisp fears, the undermining objection will still raise its head. For Crisp is doubtful that Pr (4/1&2&3&TE) is sufficiently high to support the conclusion that Pr (SI|TE) > 0.5, regardless of the near certainty of the other premises. Why think that? (4) is very modestly stated, allowing that Jesus' teachings were also such that they could be plausibly interpreted not to imply the inspiration of Old and New Testament Scriptures. So why think that it has a merely modest probability? It needs to be kept in mind that Crisp is concerned with justifying belief in the inspiration of the Bible (IB). Hence, canonical concerns intrude:

I did import a version of Swinburne's ecclesiastic concerns into the argument, because I thought we'd need some reason to think that the books settled on by the church in their selection of the NT canon were inspired… . What about Jesus' teachings suggests that Jude, say, or Hebrews is an inspired document?… I worry about the strength of the inference from Jesus' promises about the Spirit's guidance to the apostles to the claim that the authors of Jude or Hebrews, but also other NT books, were writing under inspiration when they penned those books.296

The worry is real, but throughout this locus, I have avoided speaking of the inspiration of the Bible, which raises canonical questions, in favor of speaking of scriptural inspiration, which leaves the question of which books are to be included among the inspired Scriptures an open question.297 So (4) is formulated so as to allow blurry

boundaries to the canon, especially the NT canon, by speaking of New Testament Scriptures, that is to say, books included in, but not necessarily co-extensive with, the canonical NT. Jesus' bestowal of his divine authority upon the twelve apostles gives grounds for regarding apostolic writings as having that same authority in their teaching, leaving us then to inquire which books are apostolic. We have seen that very early on the Gospels and a collection of Paul's letters were regarded as Scripture, on a par with the OT. Whether Jude or Hebrews should also be included among the apostolic writings can remain an open question for further investigation. Fortunately, not much hangs doctrinally upon how this question is answered, since the Gospels and Paul are adequate for a full formulation of Christian doctrine

So (4) is not rendered weakly probable by Crisp's misgiving, nor the argument as a whole undermined. It is noteworthy that despite his hesitations, Crisp still allows that the probability of IB on the basis of the evidence may be ~0.5.298 When we remember that such a figure represents but the lower probability bound of biblical inspiration, then the defender of belief in scriptural inspiration can rest quite content with such a result. Thus, the undermining objection proves no more insuperable than the problem of dwindling probabilities.

Moreover, an unspoken assumption of Crisp's objection is that we cannot be epistemically justified in holding a belief if that belief has for us a credence or epistemic probability <0.5. But epistemologists like Elizabeth Jackson have plausibly challenged that assumption. According to Jackson, there is, indeed, a limit to how low one's credence can go before one loses epistemic justification for the relevant belief, but setting an exact threshold is difficult. She appeals to various cases to show that "believing p could be rational even if one's credence in p is lower than 0.5."299 In the case of the canonicity of certain NT books, the universal testimony of the Christian church over the ages gives us some reason to think that these books are inspired and, hence, canonical; in any case, there seems to be no basis for assigning a very low probability to their

canonicity. That may leave us epistemically justified in believing in their canonicity even if our credence is <0.5. What is irrational, Jackson explains, is being overly confident in such beliefs. “This overconfidence is characterized by an excessively high credence, which leads to dogmatism and being closed off to new evidence.”300 A modest confidence in full scriptural inspiration on evidential grounds seems quite defensible.

One final point needs to be made. Crisp assumes not merely that every Christian is justified in his belief in biblical inspiration but that every Christian is so justified in the same single way. There is no justification for such an assumption. It could well be the case that some Christians’ belief in scriptural inspiration is justified by an evidential argument, but others’ belief may be justified by the inward work of the Holy Spirit or even some other means. Crisp himself proposes a testimonial basis rooted in a community’s experts. This deserves, I think, further exploration. The point here, it seems to me, is not that the Church exercises a certain authority in declaring books to be canonical nor that certain experts in the Christian community testify to the inspiration of the canonical books but rather that one finds oneself a member of the worldwide body of Christ composed of regenerate believers who enjoy, like oneself, a personal relationship with God and who testify that they experience the canonical Scriptures, especially the NT, as God’s Word.301 God speaks to them, as well as to oneself, through the Bible. This is powerful testimonial evidence from the company of the redeemed that the Bible is God’s inspired Word.

Crisp acknowledges the importance of such testimonial evidence but notes that, absent good reason to prefer the Church’s testimony to that of its competitors, it faces potential defeaters from adherents of competing communities, for example Muslims, that their Scriptures rather than the Bible are inspired. “All this, of course,” he admits, “absent good reason to prefer the Church’s testimony to its competitors’.”302 If we had good reason to trust the Church over alternative sources of testimony on biblical inspiration, then testimonial evidence provided by the Church might well justify our

belief that the Bible is inspired. But surely we do have such reason: our Christian brethren, in contrast to those who do not know God, are regenerate and indwelt by the Spirit of God and so are trustworthy witnesses when it comes to hearing God's voice in the Bible. Moreover, the witness of the Holy Spirit and the arguments from natural theology and history, which both support scriptural inspiration and impugn the credibility of competitors to the Church, supply such good reason to trust our brethren's testimony. On the basis of their testimony we may be able justifiably to move beyond belief in scriptural inspiration to belief in biblical inspiration. Our Protestant brethren have not been led astray by ecclesiastical tradition to add to the de facto Jewish canon books that our Lord himself did not recognize. Their testimony to biblical inspiration is therefore especially salient.

As the Westminster divines saw, an individual believer may thus well have cumulative grounds for belief in biblical inspiration, in which case an evidential argument establishing its conclusion to a probability of <0.5 may play a valuable role in a cumulative case for belief in biblical inspiration. By grounding belief in biblical inspiration on the inward work of the Holy Spirit, on the witness of natural theology and history, and perhaps on the testimony of the company of the redeemed, we have sufficient grounds for affirming biblical inspiration.

4 Concluding Remarks

In this locus we have attempted to establish a foundation for Christian doctrine in the teaching of sacred Scripture. Crucial to an understanding of this project is the differentiation between the question of what the Christian Scriptures teach about themselves and the question of what epistemic justification might be given of our belief in what the Scriptures teach about themselves. Our main concern is with the former question, seeking to explicate faithfully the teaching of Scripture about Scripture and to enunciate a doctrine of

Scripture that is both philosophically coherent and plausible. But we have also had something to say by way of defense of the rationality of belief in scriptural inspiration and its implications.

Since the Scriptures have been traditionally treated as a special revelation from God, we began with an examination of the relation between revelation and Scripture. We saw that revelation has been variously understood as an act, as the thing revealed, and as the subjective experience of a percipient. Sacred Scripture would belong to the second category, a linguistic deposit revealed by God. While revelation often concerns matters which would be otherwise unknown, we saw that there is no good reason to so restrict the term. Neither must we think of “revelation” as a success term, since there are idiomatic uses of the word in cases in which an objective revelation is not successfully apprehended by an experiencing subject. These results allow us to speak properly of Scripture as a revelation from God that is objective and person-independent.

We saw that while divine revelation as described in the Bible is polymorphous, various types of revelation may be classed as instances of either a manifestation model of revelation or a communication model. Scripture would be a paradigmatic instance of a communication model of divine revelation. We may therefore think of sacred Scripture as a communication from God to us in human language.

Prophecy, in which human persons are moved by the Holy Spirit to utter God’s message to other persons, constitutes an important part of OT Scripture, as does the divinely given law. But II Tim 3.16 treats all or every Scripture as inspired. A crucial insight into the nature of scriptural inspiration is that inspiration is a property of the Scriptures, not their authors. The inspiration of Scripture implies that Scripture serves both pedagogical and pastoral purposes, including the teaching of sound doctrine and refutation of doctrinal errors.

The Jewish Scriptures are treated by the canonical Jesus and NT writers as God’s inspired Word. What Scripture says, God says. It is therefore authoritative in its teaching. The Jewish Scriptures are

taken to possess divine authority, and therefore both Jesus and the NT authors base their doctrine upon its teachings. But Jesus did not limit himself to the authority of the OT. Rather he claimed an authority in his own right that exceeded even that of the Jewish Scriptures. Moreover, he bestowed that authority upon his twelve disciples to extend his ministry, and that not simply to Israel prior to Jesus' death. Rather Jesus took pains to equip the Twelve to carry on the ministry he had begun beyond his death to the entire world. The apostolic authors of the NT, including Paul, who was lately added to the company of the apostles, were well aware of the divine authority they exercised and the status of their message as the Word of God.303 By the end of the first century, NT writings such as Luke/Acts and the letters of Paul were already explicitly called "Scripture" by NT writers.

The divine inspiration of Scripture is conceived by NT writers to be both plenary and verbal. The entirety of any book taken to be divine Scripture is regarded as inspired. Verbal inspiration is an implication of God's revelation's being a linguistic deposit and of the emphasis of scriptural authors upon individual words drawn from Scripture in their teaching. Thus, it is the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Scriptures which are inspired, texts which textual scholars have been able to reconstruct with a remarkable degree of accuracy.

Theologians slowly came to realize that scriptural inspiration is not only plenary and verbal but also confluent, that is to say, inspired books are just as much a product of their human authors as of their divine author. The challenge has been to articulate an adequate theory of inspiration that will preserve scriptural inspiration's being plenary, verbal, and confluent. Nothing is said in Scripture, apart from prophecy, about how Scripture comes to be inspired, leaving the enunciation of a theory of inspiration to the philosophical theologian. The doctrine of middle knowledge, to be further explored in Volume IIa De Deo: Attributa Dei, provides the key to such a theory. On the basis of his knowledge of various counterfactual conditionals about how human persons would freely act in any set of

circumstances in which God might place them, God can weakly actualize certain states of affairs without infringing upon the freedom of the human agents who strongly actualize those states of affairs. By weakly actualizing the composition of the books of the Bible, God can bring it about that scriptural inspiration is in the fullest sense confluent. The degree to which divinely inspired writings might be actualized independent of divinely inspired authors is striking. Given the doctrine of middle knowledge, then, we see how plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration of Scripture can be coherently affirmed. Because God knew the relevant counterfactuals, he was able to decree a world containing just those circumstances and persons such that the authors of Scripture would freely compose their respective writings, which God intended to be his gracious Word to us. In the providence of God, the Scriptures are thus both the Word of God and the word of man.

The doctrine of scriptural inspiration has a number of important implications. First, Scripture is a verbal communication from God to man and is thus in that sense a propositional revelation from God. Second, as a divine revelation or communication from God, Scripture carries the authority of God himself. Third, Scripture authoritatively communicates to us various truths about God and is thus the basis for Christian doctrine. Fourth, as God's authoritative Word to us, Scripture is truthful in all that it teaches. The crucial question for biblical interpreters will then be, what do the Scriptures teach? We must avoid overly easy proofs of historicity, authorship, and scientific matters on the basis of scriptural statements. Rather we must determine on a case by case basis what any passage of Scripture intends to teach and what, if any, are the historical entailments of Christian doctrines. Affirmation of such a nuanced doctrine of biblical inerrancy serves as a safeguard against theological drift and decay.

Finally, as for the question of the epistemic justification of belief in scriptural inspiration, a multi-faceted approach, such as envisioned in the Westminster Confession, seems the best approach. There is no reason to think that belief in scriptural inspiration is justified for every Christian in exactly the same and single way. Rather for

many–indeed, most, if the universal testimony of the Church down through the centuries is to be taken seriously–Scripture is experienced as God's Word in a properly basic way. For others the testimony of the historical Jesus may provide a basis for belief in the inspiration of various scriptural books. The arguments of natural theology ground belief in the existence of God, and the evidence concerning the fate of Jesus grounds belief in God's raising him from death. The resurrection vindicated Jesus' personal claim to authority and, hence, his teaching. Jesus not merely assumed but taught the divine inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures. Moreover, Jesus' selection and commissioning of the Twelve and his bestowal of his authority upon them to carry on his work beyond his death is historical, so that what the apostles proclaimed, whether in speech or writing, has that divine authority. The very early classification of NT writings like Luke-Acts and the letters of Paul as Scripture by the early church testifies to the recognition of that authority. The witness of God himself and of history thus combine to justify belief in scriptural inspiration. We can perhaps justifiably move from belief in scriptural inspiration to belief in full canonical biblical inspiration on the basis of the testimony of the Church that Christians do experience the Bible as God's Word to us.

Sacred Scripture, being God's authoritative Word, is the foundation of Christian doctrine. It teaches us about God and anything else in relation to God. It therefore serves as the foundation for Christian systematic theology. In what ensues we shall in each successive locus take as our point of departure scriptural teaching on any matter before reflecting philosophically upon it.[304]

Notes

1 On divine revelation see especially George Mavrodes, Revelation in Religious Belief (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) and Richard Swinburne, Revelation: From Metaphor to Analogy, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), concisely summarized in Richard Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture, Tradition, and the Church,” in The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 11–29. These treatments are complementary: Mavrodes explores the concept of a divine revelation, while Swinburne is preoccupied with how we may recognize a divine revelation. James Orr, Revelation and Inspiration (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910) sought to connect the concept of revelation with scriptural inspiration. See more recently Sandra Menssen and Thomas Sullivan, The Agnostic Inquirer: Revelation from a Philosophical Standpoint (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). Contemporary philosophical theologians who have addressed the doctrine of Scripture include William J. Abraham, Stephen T. Davis, and Nicholas Wolterstorff; see, e.g., William J. Abraham, The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Stephen T. Davis, The Debate about the Bible: Inerrancy Versus Infallibility (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); Nicholas Wolterstorff, Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflection on the Claim that God Speaks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

2 See supra, 35–37.

3 Unfortunately, an unsympathetic critic like James Barr is oblivious to this distinction. He says that the argument that is “most incessantly used” by “fundamentalists” is this: “The Bible is authoritative, inspired and inerrant because it itself says so. Because the Bible itself says so, we have to believe it, and if we do not, then nothing in the Bible would have any value” (James Barr, Fundamentalism, 2nd ed. [London: SCM, 1981], 72, 260). He attributes this confused and circular reasoning not merely to popularizers but to the old Princeton theologians Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, and B. B. Warfield. He cites Charles Hodge's statement on the basis of scriptural authority, “The infallibility and divine

authority of the Scriptures are due to the fact that they are the word of God; and they are the word of God because they were given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost” (Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, reprint ed., [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1940], 1:153), as though Hodge were answering the question as to the reasons for belief in scriptural authority (Barr, Fundamentalism, 262). Barr describes the Princetonians' doctrine of Scripture as asserting, “The Bible was inerrant because it was inspired… . But why was it inspired? Because it made inspired (and therefore inerrant) statements that it was inspired. That the argument was circular is clear” (Barr, 263). Barr complains that the doctrine “made no attempt to accommodate the growing practice of biblical criticism within the doctrinal framework” (Barr, 263–264), when in fact the distinctive feature of the Princetonians' position was that it provided a defense of biblical inspiration and authority consistent with approaching the Scriptures as ordinary historical documents and therefore consistent with biblical criticism.

Remarkably, Barr recognizes that Hodge distinguished the epistemic question from the doctrinal question:

“But then the question arises: how do we know that what the Bible teaches about inspiration is true? In other words, can any sort of reason be given why this biblical doctrine of inspiration should be accepted? Hodge's answer is that it lies beyond the sphere of Christian theology to discuss that question. ‘After showing what the Scriptures teach on the subject, it would be necessary to show that what they teach is true. This, however, is not the position of the Christian theologian' (Hodge, Systematic Theology, 1:166). That is to say, it is a presupposition of any activity calling itself Christian theology that it accepts, even without asking for a reason, the teaching of the Bible on a question like this” (Barr, Fundamentalism, 262).

Barr would turn Hodge and Warfield into presuppositionalists, even though they offered a robust apologetic consistent with critical methods in support of biblical inspiration based on the testimony of the historical Jesus. In the above quotation Hodge is simply saying that such a task does not fall upon the systematic theologian. When Barr charges that the Princetonians reduced the grounds for the authority of Scripture to a single ground, viz., verbal inspiration, he once more conflates the ground of Scripture's authority with the grounds for believing Scripture to be authoritative (Barr, 264).

4 Herman Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:349; cf. 1:340. In Bavinck's view, general revelation is the conscious and free act of God by which he makes himself known to fallen human beings by means of nature and history in order that they should turn to him and keep his law or else be found inexcusable. Special revelation is the conscious and free act of God by which he makes himself known by way of special means that are concentrated in the person of Christ to those human beings who live in light of the special revelation in order that they may accept the grace of God by faith in Christ or else receive a more severe judgement (Bavinck, 1:350).

5 Swinburne, Revelation, 335, states that the Christian Revelation is not merely the original revelation given by Jesus but “the one developed and refined in the Church.” It is “a whole way of looking at things, embedded in documents and a community, and continually being worked out by them” (338). The Church “taught and developed” Jesus' teaching, and “All of this constituted a revelation” (341). “The revelation goes on; it is their witness, yet their witness to an original source, which forms the revelation” (344). He speaks of the probability that “the Christian Revelation in its developed form is true” (349). Again, “the (core of) the teaching of Jesus developed by the Church” is “a true revelation from God” (353). The best sense I can make of these statements is that Christian Revelation, as Swinburne understands it, is what Jaroslav Pelikan calls Christian Doctrine, viz., what the Church believes and teaches.

6 Mavrodes, Revelation, 93, takes revelation to be “a species of experience, … a conscious and at least partly cognitive encounter with an entity external to the self.” In Mavrodes' view, in the absence of such an experience a genuine revelation has not taken place. Moreover, on Mavrodes' view sentences and theophanies are the means or mode of divine revelation, not what is revealed. So on Mavrodes' view divine revelation is a subjective experience of coming to realize something due to God's communicating or manifesting it to us. “If I am correct in thinking that revelation is a sort of experience, then the appropriate substitutions for n [the individual having a revelation] must refer to individuals that are capable of having experiences. This would require, I suppose, that they be entities that are capable of consciousness and cognition” (Mavrodes, 94)

7 It is noteworthy that Stephen Davis is the only philosophical theologian whom I have read who affirms all three. He distinguishes original revelation (divine revelatory acts in history), recorded revelation (e.g., the Bible), and appropriated revelation (experience of the addressee) (Stephen T. Davis, “Revelation and Inspiration,” in The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology, ed. Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 36–37).

8 These cases falsify the assertions of Albrecht Oepke: “Revelation is not the impartation of supernatural knowledge or the excitement of numinous feelings. Knowledge can certainly come through revelation, and the revelation of God will be accompanied by numinous feelings (Ex 19.16; Is 6.5, etc.). But revelation is not to be identified with these. In the proper sense, it is the action of Yahweh,” and “It is hardly an accident, nor is it due to mere linguistic development … that Scripture is never indicated by our present terms in the NT. Revelation is not a material possession we have in black and white. It is a divine act, the unveiling of what is hidden” (Albrecht Oepke, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965], 3:573, 583). Oepke concludes his discussion of revelation in the NT with an

inconsistent theological summary in which he conflates revelation as content, act, and experience (3:591).

9 Compare Bavinck, who similarly distinguishes between “objective revelation,” both general and special, which he takes to be those actions by which God makes himself known to human beings, and “subjective revelation,” which “can be better described as illumination” and which takes place in human consciousness so that people can recognize and understand God's objective revelation (Reformed Dogmatics, 1:350, 383). Bavinck believes that objective revelation is always accompanied by subjective revelation (implying that “to reveal” is a success term), since without illumination objective communication from God to sinners would presumably fall like water on a stone and thus be pointless. Though objective revelation ceased with the completion of Scripture, he maintains that subjective revelation is ongoing until the parousia.

10 See James Barr, “The Concepts of History and Revelation,” in Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 86–90. Barr himself does not regard the Scriptures as a verbal communication from God, since he denies “that revelation can consist in ‘propositions' because this seems to lead to a deductive system of theology,” the vices of which, he says, are well known (84).

11 See Barr, “Concepts of History and Revelation,” 86–90, for an extreme version of this thesis. Barr assumes an idiosyncratic understanding of revelation as the disclosure of something previously wholly unknown. Barr does not seek to provide another word to replace “revelation” but seeks rather to reclassify the various things that have been typically classed as divine revelation, such as divine communication. Verbal communications from God do not have to be classified as revelation, Barr thinks, since they can be understood, not as communications from an unknown God, but as fresh communications from one already known. Since Barr recognizes that the Bible does not use the word “revelation” in his sense, his rejection of the term must be based on his conceptual

analysis, not biblical exegesis. Therefore, Pannenberg's remarks on Barr's position seem confused. He protests that “Barr's limitation of the concept [of revelation] to an event which is the source of all knowledge of God is not in keeping with the [biblical] facts. But this limitation is the only reason for Barr's preference for ‘communication' over ‘revelation.' Since this argument does not hold water, there is no basis for Barr's rejection of the concept of revelation” (Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994], 1:233; cf. 1:194, 204). Barr, however, does not reject the concept of revelation but the terminology of “revelation,” precisely because “revelation” fails to capture Barr's idiosyncratic concept of revelation. Pannenberg needs to challenge Barr's conceptual analysis, not his exegesis.

William Abraham, in characterizing revelation as a “threshold concept”—that is to say, the concept of something which when fully embraced “opens up a whole new realm of reality” and brings “a world-constituting experience and a perspective-constituting event in our lives” (Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006], 86, 111)—, in effect aligns himself with Barr's extremist concept of revelation, since only the first or an epochal experience of revelation would involve such a paradigm shift; fresh communications via the Urim and Thummim hardly merit such a characterization.

12 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:203–204.

13 Mavrodes, Revelation, 88–89.

14 Mavrodes, 88.

15 Abraham affirms without argument that revelation is an “achievement” term: “if we claim that someone revealed something through saying something, then someone has to grasp and pick up on what is said for there to be a revelation” (Crossing the Threshold, 64). But then he immediately backpedals: “For a revelation to occur, something has to be picked up and received, or could have been picked up and grasped” (my emphasis). By contrast Bruce

Reichenbach argues on grounds of idiomatic uses that “reveal” does not imply apprehension by a percipient (Bruce Reichenbach, “Divine Revelation: Discernment and Interpretation,” in For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology, ed. James K. Beilby, [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006], 90–93).

16 See the interesting confusion of Oepke, who writes, “By derivation… revelation is also the message which transmits this content. It is the effective transmission of it to the hearer. This does not imply that revelation does not become revelation until this takes place, until it is received as such. It thereby becomes revelation for individuals, but from the very first it comes with the claim to be heard in the name of God, and with divine power it creates for itself the organ of reception unless culpably prevented” (Oepke, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” 3:591). If revelation is the effective transmission of content to a hearer, then “revelation” is a success term and no revelation has taken place until it is received as such. Oepke seems to want to say that the message is revelation in itself, but it does not become, for example, revelation-for-Susan until Susan receives it. But if there is a difference between revelation and revelation-for-Susan, then the effectiveness of revelation depends on Susan. Indeed, Oepke affirms that Susan can culpably prevent the message, despite its divine power, from becoming revelation-for-Susan.

17 Mavrodes later observes, “Human stubbornness … seems capable of almost incredible exploits of resistance… . That God speaks to someone, even expressing some proposition, does not at all seem to guarantee that what he says will be accepted” (Mavrodes, Revelation, 126). While Mavrodes' statement is consistent with the revealed proposition's being known to be true but willfully resisted, it also seems consistent with the proposition's not being believed and so not being known.

18 Mavrodes, Revelation, 34–35. He also delineates a third model which he calls the causation model, according to which God causes a person to have a certain belief by inserting it into his mind. But I

think it is dubious that such an event deserves to be called revelation at all, and it is in any case irrelevant to our topic. For a vigorous protest against such a model see Linda Zagzebski, “Religious Knowledge and the Virtues of the Mind,” in Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology, ed. Linda Zagzebski (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 218.

19 Mavrodes, Revelation, 35.

20 Mavrodes, 35.

21 Quoting David Kelsey to the effect that there exists “a widespread consensus in Protestant theology… that the ‘revelation' to which scripture attests is a self-manifestation of God in historical events, not information about God stated in divinely communicated doctrines or concepts” (The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology [London: SCM, 1975], 32), Swinburne complains that this widespread consensus was hardly heard of before the nineteenth century. There can be little doubt, he says, that from at least the second century until the eighteenth century everyone was virtually unanimous in supposing that the church possessed a propositional revelation (Swinburne, Revelation, 4). According to Pannenberg, it was only with German idealism that we first find the thought of the self-revelation of God in the sense of the strict identity of subject and content, a thought exploited by Barth to rule out all other forms of revelation (Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:222–223). What Swinburne fails to mention is that that propositional revelation was identified with the linguistic deposit contained in Holy Scripture. In Pannenberg's opinion, the historico-critical dissolution of the doctrine of inspiration cut the ground from under the authority of Scripture as a direct expression of divine revelation, and Kant's criticism of natural theology threw doubt on the whole postulate of the reality of God. Hence, even Pannenberg rejects propositional revelation in favor of God's self-revelation indirectly through historical events. Carl F. H. Henry's God, Revelation and Authority, vol. 4, God Who Speaks and Shows (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999) is an extended

denunciation of this major switch in modern theology away from propositional revelation under the pressure of biblical criticism.

22 For a strong bifurcation between God's self-disclosure and theological propositions as our faith response, see John H. Hick, Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., Foundations of Philosophy Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 59–67. A difficulty for Hick's bifurcation is that if our theological propositions are true, if our way of experiencing God as ___ is veridical, then it seems that those propositions can be said to have been revealed. Hick eventually came to reject the truth/falsity of theological propositions about God (the Real).

23 Mavrodes, Revelation, 93. Reichenbach, “Divine Revelation,” 94–95, notes that only in the case of mystical experience would there be no propositional content given in a revelation.

24 Abraham, Crossing the Threshold, 58. Cf. William J. Abraham, “Revelation,” in The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology, ed. Ian A. McFarland et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 445–447. It is unclear how his characterization of divine revelation as an act is compatible with Abraham's taking revelation to be “a norm of truth” or with his affirmation, “A faithful testimony or record of God's activity in Christ … clearly constitutes divine revelation. Hence scripture and revelation, while they are logically distinct notions, are materially inseparable” (William J. Abraham, “Philosophical Reflection on Revelation and Scripture,” in A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 700). Of course, revelation and Scripture are conceptually distinct, but if they are materially the same, then Scripture is a revelation. Revelation as divine action, while correct, should be not taken to exclude revelation as content and experience.

25 See Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:326–329; Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:198–214.

26 Barr's objection that these are somewhat marginal books in the NT (Barr, Fundamentalism, 67) is irrelevant to the question of what Scripture teaches about itself, since we are not interested at this point in the credibility of that teaching. For that reason, pace Barr, it is perfectly legitimate to appeal to any passage from anywhere in the Bible to express this doctrine, and we need not assume that these two books come substantially from Paul and Peter. Barr consistently conflates the question of what Scripture teaches with the question whether what Scripture teaches is true. Again, Barr's objection that it is nonsense to say that the Bible as a whole claims to be divinely inspired because “There is no ‘the Bible' that ‘claims' to be divinely inspired, there is no ‘it' that has ‘a view of itself'. There is only this or that source, like II Timothy or II Peter, which make [sic] statements about certain other writings… .” (78) has no weight, since there certainly is today such a thing as the Bible, even if there was not at the time these two books were written, and it is perfectly sensible to ask what a literary work or corpus says about writings contained within it, such as the books of the OT.

27 See discussion in Richard J. Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, Word Biblical Commentary 50 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 229–235. The best understanding of the view that the reader's interpretation is at issue is that the view which the author of II Peter rejects is the view that a prophecy's interpretation is purely conventional, so that any reader is free to give the text the interpretation he prefers, an anticipation of postmodern hermeneutics. On the view that it is the prophet's own interpretation that is at stake, the best understanding is that the view which the author rejects is the view that prophecy has a purely human origin and hence an idiosyncratic interpretation.

28 There is a parallelism between the two clauses of v. 21 created by the repetition of conjugates of the verb pherein: “no prophecy was ever borne (ēnechthē) through human volition, but men borne (pheromenoi) by the Holy Spirit spoke.” Bauckham shows that the terminology of the entire passage is typical for Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian literature dealing with inspiration. Closest to II Peter's phrase is the term pneumatophoros, meaning spirit-bearing or spirit-

borne, depending upon accentuation (LXX Hos 9.7; Zeph 3.4; Theophilus Ad Autolycum 2.9, 22; 3.12).

29 So Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 224.

30 The notion of prophets' being carried along by God's Spirit is common in Hellenistic Judaism (e.g., Philo Life of Moses 1.283; The Special Laws 1.65; Josephus Antiquities of the Jews 4.119). Marshall agrees that the reference is strictly to prophecy: “what is said here applies strictly only to prophetic statements which need interpretation, and it does not necessarily apply to the whole of the Old Testament” (I. Howard Marshall, Biblical Inspiration [Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1982], 25).

31 See discussion in I. Howard Marshall, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, International Critical Commentary (London: T & T Clark International, 1999), 791–792; Philip H. Towner, The Letters to Timothy and Titus, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 585–587. Although Marshall expresses his personal skepticism about Gottlob Schrenk's case for occasionally taking graphē to signify “the totality of OT Scripture,” (“γραφή,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964], 1:749–761), Marshall gives no argument to justify his skepticism. Marshall's construal of Rom 4.3, in particular, to mean, not “what does the Old Testament say?”, but rather “what is said in the passage that I am about to quote?” seems very unnatural. Even Schrenk concedes too much with respect to locutions where Paul states “the Scripture says” followed by a specific quotation, for such a locution no more implies that “the Scripture” refers to a specific passage than does “the Bible says” followed by quotation of a specific verse. Towner's preference for “Every [text/passage of] Scripture is inspired by God” is predicated on his implausible denial that Gal 3.8, 22 refer to the whole of Scripture.

32 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 792.

33 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 792–793; cf. Marshall, Biblical Inspiration, 25–26: “no New Testament writer would have conceived of the possibility of a book being classified as Scripture and yet as not being inspired by God. Whichever translation we adopt … the point is that every part of Scripture is profitable for its divinely-intended purposes in virtue of its divine inspiration.” Besides this obvious point, Marshall also notes the awkwardness of the Greek to express “Every/all Scripture that is inspired is also profitable…,” as well as the pointlessness of the kai – why say that every inspired Scripture is also profitable?

34 Contrast Orr's misconception of scriptural inspiration: “it is important to notice that inspiration belongs primarily to the person, and to the book only as it is the product of the inspired person. There is no inspiration inhering literally in the paper, ink, or type, of the sacred volume. The inspiration was in the soul of the writer; the qualities that are communicated to the writing had their seat first in the mind or heart of the man who wrote” (Orr, Revelation and Inspiration, 162–63). This surprising statement not only contradicts II Tim 3.16 but is incompatible with Orr's statements concerning the principal role played by God's general providence in the writing of Scripture. Orr's mistake is compounded by his proceeding to distinguish degrees of inspiration, a notion completely foreign to the text, since “it does not follow that all inspired persons possess the Spirit in a like eminent degree” (177). For a similar failure to see that inspiration belongs properly to the written text see Abraham, Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture, chap. 3. Abraham thinks that divine inspiration must be rooted in an adequate conception of what it is for one agent to inspire another and believes that the best way to begin is to look closely at a paradigm case of inspiration as it operates in the common world of human agents; e.g., a good teacher's inspiring his students (63). “I see no reason why we cannot today be inspired by God just as people of old were inspired by God” (72).

35 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 794–795. I shall not respond to Luke Johnson's disparaging remarks about interpreters who find II Tim 3.16 relevant to and important for the authority of Scripture, but

shall focus on his claim that their “premises… are all wrong not only exegetically … but also hermeneutically” (Luke Timothy Johnson, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, The Anchor Bible 35A [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 422).

Consider first his exegetical objections. (1) Paul cannot be making a statement about the Christian Bible, for the New Testament collection was not yet in existence. This rather surprising pièce de résistance is rooted in Johnson's portrayal of his interlocutors as holding that “the inspiration of the entire Bible” is here at stake (422 [my emphasis]). But we can agree with Johnson that “The term graphē, as everywhere else in Paul, refers to those compositions read and studied in the synagogue from the Law (Torah), Prophets (Nebi'im), and Writings (Ketubim), in whatever collection then existed” (423) without abandoning interest in what our passage implies about these compositions. In fact, when Johnson says, “Paul's reference was necessarily, then, to whatever collection of compositions he and the earliest churches used and regarded as authoritative,” he opens the door to the possibility that apostolic writings may have also been included in such collections, especially if II Timothy is, pace Johnson, post-Pauline. (2) Paul's purpose in talking about Scripture is not to make an ontological or doctrinal statement but a functional statement. We can agree that Paul's overriding purpose is to make a point about the usefulness of Scripture without assuming a false dichotomy between doctrine (ontology) and function. On the contrary, function is rooted in ontology; it is because Scripture is inspired that it is useful in the ways listed. Johnson admits, “Insofar as they were graphē, Paul agreed with all his fellow Jews that they were inspired by God and authoritative, were indeed revelatory of God's very word. This is not arguable” (423) – a claim that is as ontological as can be! (3) Paul and his contemporaries did not confine “inspiration” to those literary compositions that are now found in the Bible. Alluding to extra-biblical examples of inspired prophecies, prayers, and literary compositions, Johnson's point is that “To say that all Scripture was inspired, in other words, was not in Paul's day to make a unique or

exclusive claim, even though it was to make an important one" (423). The force of this objection is not entirely clear. The objection seems to target the interlocutor's belief in "the Bible as the exclusive source of divine revelation" (422 [my emphasis]). This is again a straw man. A doctrine of Scripture has no interest in making a unique, much less exclusive, claim to divine revelation, since the biblical God reveals himself in manifold ways, as we have seen. The objection also trades on the ambiguity of the term "inspiration," for of course prophets and seers of all sorts could be said to be "inspired." But that sort of personal inspiration is very different from a God-breathed Scripture, which is unique to the biblical books. To carry his objection Johnson needs to show that the author of II Timothy himself accepted other literary compositions as God-breathed, which is unprovable.

Consider now Johnson's so-called hermeneutical objections. (1) The authority of the Bible does not rest on its inspiration but on its canonicity. This objection cannot plausibly claim to represent the mind of the author of II Timothy, which suggests that Johnson understands by "hermeneutical" something like "theological." Not only are such concerns dubiously relevant to biblical interpretation, but in this case the claim stands things on their head. Precisely because books are inspired and authoritative they therefore form a canon; a canon formed arbitrarily would have no authority over a competing arbitrarily formed collection. (2) The Bible functions within the process of revelation not as an exclusive textual source but as an essential and normative resource for discerning and measuring God's self-disclosure within human existence and activity. Again, a false dichotomy: the Bible can be both a unique and exclusive textual source of divine revelation as well as an essential and normative resource for apprehending God's self-disclosure. (3) The theological conviction that the Bible is divinely inspired rests not on the Bible's self-referential statements, but on Christians' faith that through its very human and culturally conditioned words God's word is also spoken. Johnson here conflates the two questions that we have been careful to keep distinct: (i) the Scripture's self-referential

teaching and (ii) the epistemic justification for accepting the Scripture's teaching about itself. (See by contrast the distinction neatly drawn by Marshall, Biblical Inspiration, 16, 45–47). II Tim 3.16 is relevant to (i).

36 Pace Douglas J. Moo, 2 Peter and Jude, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 86, who writes, “the claims of the Bible itself demand that we fully acknowledge both that specific human beings, with all their individual idiosyncrasies, wrote the words of Scripture, and that God caused the words he wanted to be written to be written” (my emphasis).

37 Scripture thus fulfills Michael Rea's desiderata for an authority by specifying both its domain (doctrine and morals) and kind (theoretical and practical) of authority (Michael C. Rea, “Authority and Truth,” in The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures, ed. D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016], 872–898). Cf. Abraham's indictment of the argument for biblical inerrancy from the Bible's authority because the argument fails to specify the scope of the authority of Scripture (Abraham, Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture, 32).

38 William D. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, Word Biblical Commentary 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 570. Collins says that the singular didaskalia “is virtually a technical term for ‘apostolic or Christian teaching as a whole'” (Raymond F. Collins, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002], 255).

39 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 42. Of the 15 uses in the pastorals didaskalia is used nine times to denote the content, rather than the activity, of teaching (I Tim 1.10; 4.1, 6; 6.1, 3; II Tim 4.3; Tit 1.9; 2.1, 10). The cognate didachē occurs in II Tim 4.2 and Tit 1.9 with the same two meanings.

40 Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 570. Although Towner, Timothy and Titus, 592, takes reproof to be primarily moral, still he is surely correct to note that “‘teaching'… in this context of opposition and

heresy involves the stages identified as convicting and correcting, which allow for the next stage of ethical development to take place," so that doctrinal correction must be in view. As Collins comments, "The Scriptures… will help him to deal with the doctrinal and moral errors that he must confront" (Collins, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, 264).

41 This belies Barr's claim that II Tim 3.16 says "nothing about scripture being the foundation and final criterion for faith … all it says is that scripture is practically 'useful' for correction and training in righteousness" (Barr, Fundamentalism, xviii). Conspicuously absent from Barr's statement are teaching and reproof.

42 For numerous such examples of divine speech being ascribed to Scripture and vice versa, see Norman Geisler, Systematic Theology (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 1:233–234).

43 See especially John W. Wenham, Christ and the Bible (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), chap. 1. For a thorough list of the citations of Jewish Scriptures that the Evangelists say Jesus made or included in his teachings, see Lee Martin McDonald, The Formation of the Biblical Canon, vol. 1: The Old Testament: Its Authority and Canonicity (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 337–339. Surveying the "wealth of relevant material coming from all four Gospels and from all the four major strata of the Synoptic Gospels" (Wenham, Christ and the Bible, 11–12), Wenham does not attempt to differentiate between authentic and inauthentic sayings of Jesus with regard to Scripture, but invites his reader to simply subtract any sayings he deems inauthentic, confident that any fair-minded investigation will leave a historical remainder that establishes Wenham's thesis that the historical Jesus accepted and taught the divine authority of the Jewish Scriptures. Our claim does not require Wenham's invited winnowing process, since our concern is with the canonical Jesus in the understanding of the early church. Thus, Wenham's survey establishes our thesis all the more powerfully.

44 One of the shortcomings of Wenham's case is that he moves too quickly from Jesus' quotations of authoritative statements by God himself to inferring the authority of Scripture (Wenham, Christ and

the Bible, 16–18). For example, Jesus' high regard for the law (Mt 5.17–20; 15.1–9) is hardly surprising given the provenance of the law and so fails to prove a high regard for Scripture as such. More relevant will be quotations of Scripture as authoritative, even though God is not the direct speaker.

45 Lee Martin McDonald, The Formation of the Biblical Canon, vol. 2: The New Testament: Its Authority and Canonicity (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark,), 4; cf. A. C. Sundberg, Jr., “The Making of the New Testament Canon,” in The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, ed. Charles M. Laymon (New York: Abingdon, 1971), 1217.

46 “The things that are to come” could well refer to the Johannine Apocalypse, which presents itself as a Spirit-directed prophecy in book form (Rev 1.10–11, 19).

47 Wilhelm Mundle remarks,

“Some scholars argue that only Jesus' proclamation is revelation and that the preaching of the early church is but an approximation to it …, but … this view does not do justice to the statements of the NT. The NT does not draw a distinction here: the apostolic message is called the ‘word of God' just as much as the word of Jesus (cf. Luke 5:1; 8:21; with 1 Cor 14:26; Col 1:25). The consequence of this understanding was that early Christianity accepted both the words of Jesus transmitted in the Gospels and the apostolic writings into the canon, and gave them recognition as the authoritative records of the divine revelation” (Wilhelm Mundle, “καλύπτω,” in New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, 2nd ed., ed. Moisés Silva, [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014], 2:618).

48 Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:391.

49 As argued by Colin J. Hemer, The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History, ed. Conrad H. Gempf (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990).

50 Robert Gundry has argued forcefully on the basis of Mattheanisms found in Luke for Luke's use of Matthew's Gospel (Robert H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 1–5).

51 Mounce appeals as a precedent to Mark's ascribing an amalgam of quotations from Is 40.3; Ex 23.20; Mal 3.1 to Isaiah alone (Mk 1.2–3) (Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 311). But this is better seen as the common practice of ascribing a pastiche of passages to the most renowned prophet quoted. Johnson comments that the syntax of the Greek of I Tim 5.18 naturally connects the citation of Jesus' words with the introductory phrase “the Scripture says” (Johnson, First and Second Letters to Timothy, 286). If we deny that Paul is quoting Luke's Gospel, then we must hold that Paul has been “careless in the shaping of his sentence: he did not think of Jesus' words as coming from Scripture, but his syntax makes it seem as though he did.” Collins notes that I Tim 5.17–19 is unlike any other passage in the epistle with its halakhic or regulatory use of Scripture concerning charges brought against elders (Collins, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, 143). This context, along with the citation of OT law (Dt 19.15) again in v. 19, supports the scriptural status of both quotations in v. 18. Collins' denial of this fact is based on his question-begging assumption that “Christian writings were not yet regarded as Scripture at this point in the history of the early church,” even though he acknowledges that “At about the same time that 1 Timothy was written, Clement of Rome wrote his letter to the church of Corinth” (146), in which Clement says that Paul wrote the Corinthians “under the influence of the Holy Spirit” (I Clement 47.3). Collins' suggestion that a common adage or proverb is being quoted is incompatible with its authority and halakhic use. Collins has to say that the author “inadvertently identified it as ‘scripture'.”

52 Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 616.

53 Again, if the author is not Paul, then I Tim 5.18; II Tim 2.6 may borrow from I Corinthians as authoritative Scripture (cf. I Cor 9.9). On the other hand, Johnson takes the close affinity of I Tim 5.18 with I Cor 9.9, 14 to indicate Pauline authorship of I Timothy, for the verses from I Corinthians also combine the same OT quotation with a supporting logion from Jesus (Johnson, First and Second Letters to Timothy, 286). Although Johnson thinks that quoting Luke's Gospel as Scripture would be impossible if Paul is the author of I Timothy, his conclusion is not inevitable when we recall that Paul is still alive and awaiting trial in Rome at the conclusion of the Acts, Luke's Gospel having been written even earlier, perhaps in the AD 50s. The traditions alluded to in I Cor 9.14 could have been incorporated into Luke's Gospel, which rapidly came to be accepted as an authoritative account of Jesus' life and, hence, as Scripture.

54 McDonald disagrees, arguing that Papias (ca. 130), who knew both the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, could not plausibly have preferred oral tradition, as he did, over Scripture (McDonald, New Testament, 8, 353). But what did Papias actually say? “I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of a living and surviving voice” (Eusebius Ecclesiastical History 3.39.4). The reason that a living witness might be more helpful than information from books is that such a person could respond to Papias' questions for elucidation or additional information. Papias says nothing to suggest that Mark and Matthew are not Scripture, as authors earlier than him recognized.

55 Assuming that Philippians was written earlier than Paul's Roman imprisonment, Schmithals argues persuasively for an early collection of seven Pauline Hauptbriefe, all written between the summer of 54 and the spring of 56 during Paul's third missionary journey, to which the independently circulating collection of pastoral epistles was later added (Walter Schmithals, “Zur Abfassung und ältesten Sammlung der paulinischen Hauptbriefe,” Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 51 [1960]: 225–45). Schmithals observes that the

failure to include in the earliest collection the remaining six extant Pauline letters does not imply their inauthenticity, since (not to mention considerations of dating) “the collection did not aim to put together a complete collection of Pauline letters, but rather to make public seven letters of the apostle with an anti-Gnostic tendency” (244). Jack Finegan, “The Original Form of the Pauline Collection,” Harvard Theological Review 49, no. 2 (1956): 85–103, appeals to Marcion's list of Pauline letters about 144, the earliest such list, as recounted by Tertullian Against Marcion 5.17, to identify a collection of the following letters: Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Thessalonians, Ephesians (a.k.a. Laodiceans), Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. By treating Corinthians and Thessalonians as one book each, Marcion's list of letters can be ordered by respective lengths, with the exception of Galatians, which may have been listed first due to Marcion's anti-Jewish sentiments, which led him to deny the OT and to accept as authoritative only Luke's Gospel and the letters of Paul.

56 Schmithals, “Abfassung und Sammlung,” 243. See also Finegan, “Original Form of the Pauline Collection,” 85–103, who observes that Ignatius likewise shows acquaintance with Romans, I Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians, and probably II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and I Thessalonians. In writing to the Ephesians (12.2), Ignatius speaks of what Paul says “in every letter” (ἐν πάσῃἐπιστολῇ). “Like the reference in II Peter 3:16 to what Paul wrote ‘in all his letters' (ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς), this can hardly mean anything other than that Paul's collected letters were a known entity” (85–86). Polycarp in Letter to the Philippians 12.3 cites Eph 4.26 as Scripture: “It is declared, then, in the Scriptures, ‘Be angry and do not sin, nor let the sun go down upon your wrath.'” Neyrey reports that it is “generally agreed among scholars” that at the end of the first century Paul's letters were collected in some form (Jerome H. Neyrey, 2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, Anchor Bible 37C [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 249); more recently also McDonald: “Scholars generally conclude that several of Paul's letters were circulating together in churches no later

than the end of the first century, at least in Asia Minor and probably elsewhere as well" (McDonald, New Testament, 35–36).

57 Note the divine passive. Davids agrees with Bauckham that "What our author is doing is attributing divine inspiration to Paul, parallel to that which he attributes to the prophets in 1:20–21, but referring to a gift of the Spirit rather than to the Spirit itself" (Peter H. Davids, The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006], 301–302).

58 Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 333.

59 Davids surmises that among these Scriptures were I Enoch, since it is cited in Jude, which was a source of II Peter (Davids, Letters of 2 Peter and Jude, 307). But Jude does not cite I Enoch as Scripture, nor was it included in the Jewish canon. Illustrations from extra-canonical writings could be employed without prejudice by NT authors (e.g., Jude 9–10; I Cor 10.4; II Tim 3.8).

60 Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 333.

61 Davids, Letters of 2 Peter and Jude, 308.

62 All this raises the question whether in speaking of "all Scripture" in II Tim 3.16 the author contemplates in addition to OT Scriptures apostolic writings as well. Apostolic writings might seem better to fit the description "the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (II Tim 3.15). But the phrase ta hiera grammata is a set phrase for the Jewish scriptures in Hellenistic Judaism (see references provided by Marshall, The Pastoral Epistles, 789) and the fact that Timothy has been acquainted with them from childhood implies that the Jewish Scriptures are in mind. In the thinking of the NT church the Jewish Scriptures, properly interpreted, do point one to Christ (Rom 16.26; Jn 5.39). Still, as Mounce comments, in the immediate context, v. 14 clearly includes the Gospel taught by Paul to Timothy, which he is to proclaim (4.2). This suggests that "γραφή refers to both the OT and the gospel message (for the latter, its oral proclamation and perhaps parts that were written and disseminated by this time are to be

included)” (Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, 568; cf. 562–564). Robert Wall points out that II Timothy considers what Timothy has heard from Paul to be normative (1.13), thereby making “a subsequent formation of a Pauline canon of his letters” a logical step (Robert W. Wall, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012], 269). However this may be, in saying that all Scripture is inspired by God, the author implies that any apostolic writing which was taken to be Scripture (cf. I Tim 5.18) is ipso facto divinely inspired. As Wall puts it, “While the communicative intent of 2 Tim 3:15-16 does not include a NT, its canonical intent does” (269).

63 Bauckham cites several early examples of NT texts being treated as Scriptures including I Tim 5.18; Epistle of Barnabas 4.14: “as it is written, ‘Many are called, but few are chosen'” (citing Mt 22.14); Polycarp's Philip 12.1: “I trust that you are well versed in the Sacred Scriptures… . It is declared then in these Scriptures, ‘Be angry and sin not,' and, ‘Let not the sun go down upon your wrath'” (citing Ps 4.4 and Eph 4.26); II Clement 2.4: “Again another scripture says, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners'” (citing Mk 2.17); and II Clement 14.2: “the Books [viz., the Old Testament] and the Apostles state… .” Bauckham comments, “The fact that in four of these instances a NT quotation is placed alongside an OT text is not insignificant. It shows that Gospels and apostolic writings were coming to be ranked with the OT Scriptures. There is nothing at all surprising in this development. Apostolic writings were regarded as inspired and authoritative from the beginning…” (Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 333).

64 Davids, Letters of 2 Peter and Jude, 307. Davids is unsure whether the author shared a written Gospel with his addressees.

65 Paul Helm remarks, perhaps somewhat tongue in cheek, that “as far as I am aware no practitioner of the allegedly dark art of ‘propositional theology' believes that ‘proposition' in ‘propositional revelation' is being used in this logicians' way.” He emphasizes that the Bible is a case of divine speech and that, even in the linguistic sense of “proposition,” “Scripture is not a simple ‘list of propositions,'

but that it contains a great variety of types of speech-acts, not only statements, but questions, commands, vows, exclamations, and so forth. The exegete and the theologian need to take account of all such forms, and not to attempt to reduce Scripture to one form, the proposition, or to pay exclusive attention to that form, neglecting all else as mere ‘wrapping'" (Paul Helm, “The Idea of Inerrancy,” in The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures, ed. D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016], 909, 910–911).

66 McDonald notes that NT writers “fully accepted” the OT Scriptures “as the authoritative word of God, but like their Jewish contemporaries, they took many liberties in the way that they cited and interpreted the Old Testament Scriptures, sometimes even altering the passages they cited” (McDonald, Old Testament, 331). Contra McDonald, the inviolability of OT Scripture is measured, not by how carefully it is cited or paraphrased or alluded to, but by how carefully the texts are copied and preserved. Multiple variants in the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible do not show “the lack of commitment to an inviolable text” (316), but merely the lack of perfect success. McDonald also seem to equivocate on the meaning of “inviolability,” which he does not define, for he takes the NT teaching's superseding that of the Old to violate the Old, when in fact it merely shows that the OT's teaching was valid for a certain time and place.

67 The scriptural view of divine inspiration is thus unexpectedly close to the Muslim view of the Qur'an: only the Arabic text is actually the Qur'an, and versions in other languages are mere translations of the Qur'an. Whether verbal inspiration necessitates an Islamic theory of inspiration as divine dictation remains to be seen.

68 One is therefore surprised at Robert Wall's claim that “According to 2 Tim 3:14-17, the future of Paul's apostolate depended on Timothy's recognition that God inspires a particular holy text, the LXX, for teaching and training” (Wall, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 274). Paul says nothing about the need for a particular translation of

the holy Scriptures, even though the particular translation Paul used was the LXX.

69 An example would appear to be Matthew 1.23's citation of LXX Is 7.14: a parthenos (virgin) shall conceive, rather than a ‘almah (maiden) shall conceive. But the difference here is really a matter of nuance or emphasis, since a maiden usually is a virgin, and the Septuagint is useful in bringing that out. This is not to deny that Matthew invests the prophecy with a radically new meaning and significance, just as he does “out of Egypt have I called my son” (Mt 2.15). Wall notes that in cases in which the Hebrew text and the LXX disagree, NT writers probably do not demonstrate a preference for the LXX, especially in the service of kerygmatic ends (Wall, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, 273). He cites with approval Wagner's judgement that at least at the level of explicit quotations in the NT, the Masoretic text and LXX share “an undeniable core that decisively shapes the contours of mainstream Christian practice and belief” (J. Ross Wagner, “The Septuagint and the ‘Search for the Christian Bible',” in Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Alan J. Torrance [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008], 23). For a survey of alternative approaches to understanding the NT's use of the OT, see Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament,” in The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 712–747. A combination of Jewish exegetical methods, intertextuality, and typology seems to suffice to explain the NT's use of the OT. Moo and Naselli's misgivings about NT use of the OT seem rooted in a perceived need to close the gap “between the original sense and the NT application” (724–725), a gap which I and many others fail to see a need to fill. It is interesting that Swinburne exemplifies their preferred canonical approach, according to which the canon as a whole constitutes a new work with God as its author, so that texts may take on new meanings in such a context. But whereas this approach makes sense for Swinburne, who takes Christian doctrine as elaborated by the church to be revelation in light of which the

Bible is to be interpreted, such an approach is inept for understanding NT authors' use of the OT, since at that time no NT canon existed.

70 Note that not merely sentence types but types of whole works are at issue. Thus, one preserves the context of the sentences comprised, thereby avoiding the problem that similar sentences without a context may have different meanings in so far as their indexical words have different referents in different contexts.

71 For discussion see Christy Mag Uidhir, ed., Art and Abstract Objects (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

72 See the accounts by Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:449–494; Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:28–34. Pannenberg misleads, however, in characterizing the affectiones, apart from authority, as “new constructs” which do not go back to early church teaching. It is not as though the affectiones were arbitrarily invented to ward off Catholic criticism of sola Scriptura; rather the affectiones were grounded in the teaching of Scripture itself but became newly relevant in dogmatic controversy.

73 For example, Bavinck states that the Reformers affirmed “the self-attested trustworthiness (αὐτοπιστια) of Scripture,” but then later explains that Scripture “brings about its own recognition by the working of the Holy Spirit” (Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:456, 465). These are two very different notions.

74 Ben Witherington III explains that although “[S]ola Scriptura is one of the main ‘solas' that the Reformation was all about, it was not in the first place a Protestant or even Reformation idea. It existed long before Luther and Calvin and was a term used to rebut many of the unbiblical papal claims” (Ben Witherington III, Sola Scriptura: Scripture's Final Authority in the Modern World [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023], 144). The doctrine of sola Scriptura meant “that the Bible was the final authority, the litmus test on all other claims in the church about authority, even those of popes and patriarchs or councils” (144). The doctrine did not imply that no other

sources of authority should be recognized, but merely that none of these “should be seen as independent or infallible authorities … that can trump what the Bible actually teaches” (161). As such, the doctrine was not a Protestant novelty. “If there is a red thread that we can trace throughout Christian history in regard to the Scriptures, it is that that the Scriptures should be seen as the final authority for faith and practice, as the litmus test for all other authority claims by tradition, reason, or experience” (161).

75 Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:488.

76 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:29.

77 Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:493.

78 Stephen T. Davis, Christian Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 268–269.

79 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:29.

80 Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:477.

81 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:31.

82 Henry complains that “the God-man and God-book are not equivalent analogues. In the incarnation one divine person assumes sinless human nature alongside his eternal divine nature; in inscripturation the divine Spirit selectively superintends fallible and sinful human beings in the inerrant oral and written proclamation of God's message” (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 4:160) But that is to misstate the analogy. The comparison, rather, is that as in Christ's case there is one hypostasis, a person, who is fully human and fully divine, so in the case of the Bible there is one hypostasis, a book, which is wholly authored by God and wholly authored by man (Thomas McCall, “On Understanding Scripture as the Word of God,” in Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 184).

83 Stephen E. Fowl, “Scripture,” in The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain

Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 349. Fowl's declaration underlines the importance of William Abraham's words, “It is pastorally irresponsible to leave the coming generation of students bereft of a coherent account of inspiration” (Abraham, Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture, 7). I therefore emphatically reject the claim of Pinnock that “There is no need for us to solve the mystery of how the Bible can be the Word of God and the words of man. But there is a great need for us to recognize that it is” (C. Pinnock, “Three Views of the Bible in Contemporary Theology,” in Biblical Authority, ed. Jack Rogers [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977], 72). It is vital to provide a plausible model of scriptural inspiration in the face of such criticisms. (Fowl is thinking of a vaguely characterized concept of revelation as an epistemological category requiring philosophical justification.)

84 For a survey of relevant texts, see E. Mangenot, “L'inspiration de l'Écriture,” in Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, ed. A. Vacant and E. Mangenot (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1923), vol. 7, pt. 2, cols. 2068–2266; William Sanday, Inspiration (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1914); Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 3rd ed., s.v. “Inspiration: II. Inspiration der hl. Schrift, dogmengeschichtlich,” by O. Weber; John F. Walvoord, ed., Inspiration and Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957); J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 60–64; Bruce Vawter, Biblical Inspiration, Theological Resources (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 20–42; John D. Woodbridge, Biblical Authority (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982); Geisler, “Church Fathers on the Bible,” chap. 7 in Systematic Theology, vol. 1.

For example, Clement of Rome advised the Corinthian church, “Look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit.” Clement can thus introduce his quotations from Scripture with the simple formula, “The Holy Spirit says… .” Even Paul's recent Corinthian correspondence is regarded as written “under the inspiration of the Spirit” (I Clement 45, 13, 47). Clement of Alexandria emphasizes both the breadth and the depth of Scripture's

inspiration. With respect to the former he asserts, “I could adduce ten thousand Scriptures of which not ‘one tittle shall pass away' without being fulfilled; for the mouth of the Lord the Holy Spirit hath spoken these things.” And of the latter, he declares, “For truly holy are those letters that sanctify and deify; and the writings or volumes that consist of those holy letters and syllables, the same apostle consequently calls ‘inspired of God…'” (Exhortation to the Greeks 9). Irenaeus expresses this same conviction when he indicts the Gnostics for accepting part of the Gospel of Luke without accepting all of it and when, in refutation of the Gnostic distinction between Jesus (the Son born of Mary) and Christ (the Father who descended upon Jesus), he bases his argument on the Holy Spirit's use of the single word “Jesus” rather than “Christ” (Against Heresies 3.4.3–4; 3.16.2). In sum, “the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit…” (2.28.2).

85 Hermann Sasse, “The Rise of the Dogma of Holy Scripture in the Middle Ages,” Reformed Theological Review 18 (1959): 45.

86 Martin Luther, “Treatise on the Last Words of David (2 Sam 23:1–7),” trans. Martin H. Bertram, in Luther's Works, vol. 15, Notes on Ecclesiastes, etc., ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 275.

87 Martin Luther, “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew,” trans. Walther I. Brandt, in Luther's Works, vol. 45, The Christian in Society II, ed. H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 208.

88 Martin Luther, Luther's Works, vol. 5, Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 26–30, trans. George Schick, ed. J. Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 352. For similar citations see E. F. Klug, From Luther to Chemnitz (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), 20.

89 See citations from A. Calov and J. A. Quenstedt in Robert D. Preus, The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism, 2 vols. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 1:281–283.

90 For many references, see Kenneth S. Kantzer, “Calvin and the Holy Scriptures,” in Inspiration and Interpretation, 138.

91 John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, 3 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 3:166 (4.8.9); John Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, vol. 3, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, trans. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 197.

92 John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, ed. and trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 1: 127; cf. 1:xxxviii, xxxix.

93 Timothy R. Phillips, “Francis Turretin's Idea of Theology and Its Bearing upon His Doctrine of Scripture,” 2 vols. (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1986), 2:748.

94 Heinrich Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum, 33rd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1965) no. 1501: 364.

95 Baruch Spinoza, Tractatus theologico-politicus, trans. Samuel Shirley (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 197–199 (11).

96 Spinoza, Tractatus, 201 (11).

97 Spinoza, Tractatus, 211 (12).

98 Spinoza, Tractatus, 209 (12).

99 Jean Le Clerc, Five Letters Concerning the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures (London: n. p., 1690), 34, this book being a translation of his Sentimens de quelques théologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire critique du Vieux Testament (1685).

100 Le Clerc, Five Letters, 126.

101 Le Prieur de Bolleville [Richard Simon], Réponse au Livre intitulé Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament (Rotterdam: Renier Leers, 1686), 122–132; Richard Simon, Histoire critique du Texte du Nouveau Testament (Rotterdam: Renier Leers, 1689; rep. ed.: Frankfurt: Minerva, 1968), chap. 23.

102 Simon, Histoire critique, 192.

103 R. S. P. [Richard Simon], Nouvelles Observations sur le Texte et les Versions du Nouveau Testament (Paris: Jean Boudot, 1695), 35. (Citation from James Tunstead Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1810 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], 49–50).

104 Le Prieur de Bolleville, Réponse, 127–128.

105 Le Prieur de Bolleville, Réponse, 128.

106 Le Clerc, Five Letters, 158; cf. Jean Le Clerc, Defense des Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament contre le prieur de Bolleville (Amsterdam: Henri Desbordes, 1686), 245.

107 Le Prieur de Bolleville [Richard Simon], De l'Inspiration des Livres Sacrez; Avec une reponse au livre intitulé Defense des Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament (Rotterdam: Renier Leers, 1699), 167–168.

108 Le Prieur de Bolleville, De l'Inspiration des Livres Sacrez, 160.

109 Le Prieur de Bolleville, De l'Inspiration des Livres Sacrez, 3.

110 Clark H. Pinnock, Biblical Revelation (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 66; see 88–95 for exposition.

111 John Henry Newman, Lectures on the Scripture Proofs of the Doctrines of the Church, Tracts for the Times 85 (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1838), 30.

112 Preus, Post-Reformation Lutheranism, 1:290–291.

113 Thomas Aquinas Summa theologiae IIa–IIae.171.5.

114 Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, “Inspiration and Criticism,” in The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, ed. Samuel G. Craig with an Intro. by Cornelius Van Til (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 420–421. See also Phillips, “Turretin's Idea of

Theology," 2:744–745, who states that the Reformed scholastics only vaguely characterized the mechanics of inspiration.

115 Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism (Oxford University Press, 1931; rep. ed: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 62.

116 Warfield, "Inspiration and Criticism," 421. So also Phillips, "Turretin's Idea of Theology," 2:752.

117 Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," in Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, 153.

118 Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Calvin and the Holy Scriptures," in Inspiration and Interpretation, 140–141.

119 See remarks of Thomas V. Morris, The Logic of God Incarnate (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 151–152, on Harry Frankfurt, "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," Journal of Philosophy 66 (1969): 829–839.

120 Randall Basinger and David Basinger, "Inerrancy, Dictation and The Free Will Defense," Evangelical Quarterly 55 (1983): 177–180.

121 Basinger and Basinger, "Inerrancy, Dictation and The Free Will Defense," 180.

122 It is intriguing that this is the conclusion to which Pinnock, quoted above, was eventually driven. He says, "A text that is word for word what God wanted in the first place might as well have been dictated, for all the room it leaves for human agency" (Clark H. Pinnock, The Scripture Principle [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984], 101). The problem is that God is said to have "controlled the writers and every detail of what they wrote" (101). "To hold that God predestined and controlled every detail of the text makes nonsense of human authorship and is tantamount to saying God dictated the text. It is quibbling over words to deny it so vigorously" (101). "If God is really in total control of all things, then he must have willed all the tragedies and atrocities that have happened… . God is the one responsible for everything that happens if he willed it so completely,

and he must take the blame" (102). I hope to show that none of these inferences is correct.

123 D. A. Carson, "Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture," in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 45.

124 Carson, "Recent Developments," 45.

125 Carson, "Recent Developments," 45.

126 Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, 9.

127 Carson, "Recent Developments," 45.

128 Norman L. Geisler, "Inerrancy and Free Will: A Reply to the Brothers Basinger," Evangelical Quarterly 57 (1985): 347–353.

129 David Basinger and Randall Basinger, "Inerrancy and Free Will: Some Further Thoughts," Evangelical Quarterly 58 (1986): 351–354.

130 Geisler, "Inerrancy and Free Will," 351.

131 This is, in effect, the response to the Basingers of Douglas Blount, "The Authority of Scripture," in Reason for the Hope Within, ed. Michael J. Murray (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 409.

132 On these conditions, see Alvin Plantinga, "Self-Profile," in Alvin Plantinga, ed. James Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, Profiles 5 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 39–40.

133 Basinger and Basinger, "Inerrancy and Free Will," 353–354.

134 Basinger and Basinger, "Inerrancy, Dictation and the Free Will Defense," 179; cf. 180.

135 Geisler, "Inerrancy and Free Will," 351.

136 Geisler, "Inerrancy and Free Will," 352.

137 Here we anticipate our discussion of divine omniscience and human freedom in De Deo, pt. I: Attributa Dei 5: Omniscience.

138 See Alvin Plantinga, “On Ockham's Way Out,” Faith and Philosophy 3 (1986): 235–269; Jonathan L. Kvanvig, The Possibility of an All-Knowing God (New York: St. Martin's, 1986); Alfred J. Freddoso, “Introduction,” in On Divine Foreknowledge (Part IV of the “Concordia”), by Luis de Molina, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 9–29; Edward R. Wierenga, The Nature of God: An Inquiry into Divine Attributes, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); William Lane Craig, Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Theism I: Omniscience, Studies in Intellectual History 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990); Thomas Flint, Divine Providence: The Molinist Account, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

139 Again, we anticipate our discussion of divine providence in this Systematic Philosophical Theology, vol. III: De creatione, pt. II.1: Providentia ordinaria.

140 Geisler, “Inerrancy and Free Will,” 352.

141 Unfortunately, since he rejects divine middle knowledge, Geisler is finally left with no solution to the problem posed by plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration. Although many theologians have appealed to divine concurrence with human actions to explain biblical inspiration (e.g., J. I. Packer, “Fundamentalism” and the Word of God [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958], 80), Geisler correctly notes that even providential concurrence (absent middle knowledge) fails to explain the role played by human free will, so that “the mystery remains inscrutable” (Geisler, Systematic Theology, 1:241; cf. 242).

142 For Molina's doctrine see Ludovici Molina De liberi arbitrii cum gratia donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia 4. This section has been translated as Luis de Molina, On Divine Foreknowledge, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

143 Plantinga, “Self-Profile,” 48–49.

144 Warfield, “Biblical Idea of Inspiration,” 154–155.

145 Warfield, “Biblical Idea of Inspiration,” 157. This invalidates Barr's attempt to play off Orr's doctrine of inspiration against Warfield's as a more dynamical view which emphasized the entire process by which the inspired record was produced (Barr, Fundamentalism, 269). It must be said that Barr misrepresents Orr's position in a number of respects.

146 This also helps us to see that the notion of “infallibly guaranteeing” is really a red herring. Weak actualization does not infallibly guarantee the result, in the sense that there are possible worlds in which the strongly actualized state of affairs does not counterfactually imply the weakly actualized state of affairs, since counterfactuals of freedom are true/false relative to a possible world. Thus, there may be a possible world relative to which a world with a freely composed Bible and a more optimal balance of good and evil is feasible for God. The verbal, plenary, confluent inspiration of Scripture thus does not require that God's guarantee be infallible, but merely that he in fact has the requisite control of free creatures to weakly actualize Scripture's composition. He can guarantee inerrancy without infallibly guaranteeing it.

147 For applications of middle knowledge to such issues as Christian exclusivism, divine sovereignty and human freedom, perseverance of the saints, infallibility, and creation/evolution see William Lane Craig, “‘No Other Name': A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ,” Faith and Philosophy 6 (1989): 172–188; William Lane Craig, “Middle Knowledge: a Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?” in The Grace of God, the Will of Man, ed. C. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 141–164; William Lane Craig, “‘Lest Anyone Should Fall': a Middle Knowledge Perspective on Perseverance and Apostolic Warnings,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 29 (1991): 65–74; Thomas P. Flint, “Middle Knowledge and the Doctrine of Infallibility,” Philosophical Perspectives 5 (1991): 373–393; Del Ratzsch, “Design, Chance and Theistic Evolution,” in Mere Creation, ed. William A. Dembski (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 289–312.

148 See further Alvin Plantinga, “Reply to Robert Adams,” in Alvin Plantinga, 372–382; Kvanvig, Possibility of an All-Knowing God, 121–148; Freddoso, “Introduction,” 62–81; Wierenga, Nature of God, 116–165; Craig, Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom, 237–278; Flint, Divine Providence, passim.

149 Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, 44. He accordingly pronounces the theory “dead and buried.”

150 On the Lessius affair see Dictionnaire de théologie catholique, s.v. “Inspiration de l'Écriture,” vol. 7, pt. 2, cols. 2135–2145; Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, chapters 2 and 3.

151 In the original Latin:

(i.) Ut aliquid sit Scriptura sacra, non est necessarium singula ejus verba inspirata esse a Spiritu Sancto.

(ii.) Non est necessarium ut singulae veritates et sententiae sint immediate a Spiritu Sancto ipsi scriptori inspiratae.

(iii.) Liber aliquis … humana industria sine assistentia Spiritus Sancti scriptus, si Spiritus Sanctus postea testetur ibi nihil esse falsum, efficitur Scriptura sacra.

152 Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, 91. “Only indirect” is not technically correct, since direct intervention is not excluded; better would be “non-deterministic.” Vawter's complete neglect of this wider context vitiates the adequacy of his exposition of this controversy (Vawter, Biblical Inspiration, 63–70). Quoting Francisco Suárez to the effect that “although everything in Scripture has been written by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the Spirit left it to the writer to write everything in a manner accommodated to himself and according to his own talents, education, and language, although under his direction,” a befuddled Vawter protests, “It may be asked whether such a sentence is not logically meaningless: the Spirit has

‘written' words that he ‘left to' the human writer to discover from his own resources” (Vawter, Biblical Inspiration, 66). But given a middle knowledge perspective, such dual authorship becomes perspicuous. Similarly, one can only smile at Vawter's allegation that Suarez, a great champion of middle knowledge, was “confused” because he affirmed both verbal inspiration and only negative assistance by the Holy Spirit: “Suárez was trying to harmonize into one system what were basically opposed conceptions of inspiration” (Vawter, Biblical Inspiration, 67). It is precisely the beauty of the doctrine of middle knowledge that it succeeds in reconciling seemingly opposed positions with respect to divine sovereignty and human freedom.

153 Woodbridge, Biblical Authority, 70.

154 See Livino de Meyer, Historia controversiarum de divina gratia, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (Venetiis: Nicolaum Pezzana, 1742), Appendix 3: Apologia a R. P. Leonardo Lessio e Societate Jesu scripta adversus censuras Lovaniensem & Duacensem Responsio ad Censuram Facultatis sacrae Theologiae Lovaniensis, 756–757.

155 Letter of Lessius to the archbishop of Machlin, in Joseph Kleutgen, “R. P. Leonardii Lessii Soc. Iesu Theologi de Divina Inspiratione Doctrina,” in Controversiarum de Divinae Gratiae Liberique Arbitrii Concordia Initia et Progressus, by Gerardus Schneeman (Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder, 1881), 466 (cited in Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, 45).

156 E. Mangenot, “L'inspiration de l'Écriture,” vol. 7, pt. 2, col. 2144.

157 Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, chap. 2.

158 See the particularly severe criticism by Phillips, “Turretin's Idea of Theology,” 2:761, who calls it a “blatant category mistake” to equate the description of inspiration's extent (viz., verbal inspiration) with a description of its procedure.

159 See discussion in Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, 45–52.

160 See references in note 138. See also Flint, “Middle Knowledge and the Doctrine of Infallibility,” 373–393. Although Flint's analysis concerns Papal infallibility, he rightly notes that it would apply to biblical infallibility as well.

161 See Burtchaell, Catholic Theories of Inspiration, chap. 3.

162 See further Nicholas Wolterstorff, Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), who in his chapter 3, “The Many Modes of Discourse,” has a fascinating discussion of what he calls “double agency,” which obtains when one person says something with words that he himself has neither uttered nor inscribed (38–57). Exploiting examples reminiscent of those employed by the seventeenth century Jesuits, Wolterstorff focuses on what he calls “appropriated discourse” as a model for Scripture: human discourse appropriated by God and thus divine discourse (51–54). “All that is necessary for the whole [Bible] to be God's book is that the human discourse it contains have been appropriated by God, as one single book, for God's discourse” (54). Such an understanding of Scripture is entirely consonant with the position defended here.

Unfortunately, Wolterstorff makes the same category mistake as did Lessius, equating inspiration with the movement of the Holy Spirit in or on the authors of Scripture rather than as a characteristic of the text itself (54; cf. 301; so also Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 4:207). Henry concludes that Scripture cannot therefore be appropriated discourse, while Wolterstorff is led to the view that the Scripture may not be inspired, in whole or in part, even though it is God's Word. Both these thinkers fail to recognize that a providentially produced piece of discourse can be inspired, in the proper sense of that term, even in the absence of any special moving of the Spirit of God upon the human author. The question of how Scripture came to be produced exposes the greatest weakness of Wolterstoff's discussion, when in chapter 7 he asks whether God can cause the events generative of Scriptural discourse. This is the same issue raised by Warfield, which, it will be remembered, cried out for a

middle knowledge solution. Intriguingly, Wolterstorff does consider ever so briefly a middle knowledge position, though without identifying it as such (121–122). Unfortunately, he rejects such a solution because he is inclined to think that there are no true counterfactuals of freedom. Eager to discover what would incline Wolterstorff to such a skeptical position, one turns to his attending endnote and is stunned to discover that no better reason is given for this skepticism than the misconceived and oft-refuted objections of William Hasker! In the end Wolterstorff is left without any explanation of how God, even given divine interventions in history, can bring about the writing of Scripture in the absence of divine middle knowledge – a weakness which draws sharp criticism on the part of Michael Levine, “God Speak,” Religious Studies 34 (1998): 14, whose critique on this score is skipped over in the interests of space in Wolterstorff's “Reply to Levine,” Religious Studies 34 (1998): 22.

163 Poignantly expressed by David Clark, “Beyond Inerrancy: Speech Acts and an Evangelical View of Scripture,” in For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology, ed. James K. Beilby (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 113–131. “A single-minded focus on objective truth directs attention away from these formational functions of Scripture. This is tragic because these spiritual functions are, in the end, the whole point of the Scripture” (131). They are not, however, the point of systematic theology as a Wissenschaft.

164 Despite Catholic claims, there is no scriptural warrant for the notion of apostolic succession or for the teaching authority of the church, which would seem to be necessary for treating church tradition as authoritative. I prefer the way Michael F. Bird, Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 64, characterizes the authority of ecclesiastical tradition: it is a “consultative norm.” That is to say, while having no intrinsic authority concerning Christian doctrine, as the record of a wealth of Christian reflection on doctrinal matters over the centuries, it is profitable to consult in one's theologizing. Bird rightly endorses the so-called

Wesleyan Quadrilateral: “Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was revealed in scripture, illumined by tradition, verified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason” (84; cf. The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church [Nashville: Abingdon, 2004], 77).

165 Orr, Revelation and Inspiration, 162.

166 “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf archived at https://perma.cc/9S3D-U37H [my emphasis]. The statement is, admittedly, frustratingly ambiguous. Sometimes it asserts flatly, “Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit,” while in other places it states that “Scripture is inerrant… in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.” Scripture is sometimes said to be inerrant in all that it “affirms” or “asserts” or “touches,” leaving us with the same sort of question as arises with respect to what it teaches.

167 Barr, Fundamentalism, 267.

168 Barr writes,

“the idea of verbal inspiration, if properly defined and guarded, is not at all incompatible with critical scholarship and modern theology. Verbal inspiration is incompatible with critical scholarship and modern theology only if it is understood as the fundamentalists have understood it, to mean and entail necessarily the total infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible, not only in its doctrinal content but also in historical details, dates, numbers of persons in battles, ascriptions of authorship, unity of books and such things

… non-fundamentalist Christianity took a turn in the wrong direction when it reacted against the fundamentalist insistence on verbal inspiration… . Instead of saying that the Bible is inspired, but not verbally inspired, it should have been said that the Bible is inspired, and even verbally inspired, but it remains fallible; it is not inerrant;

and investigation of it has to proceed along the lines of examining the writers through normal human relations, and not as a book that shares in the perfections of God" (Barr, Fundamentalism, 287).

169 Barr, Fundamentalism, 267; cf. 81.

170 Barr, Fundamentalism, 84–85.

171 This latter attempt is especially ironic in view of Barr's later repudiation of the assumption that "all biblical interpretation must be done in an atmosphere free from any philosophical influences whatever" (Barr, Fundamentalism, 149). "Do conservatives claim to work with no philosophical (or theological?) assumptions at all?" he demands, "Or do they claim that there is a right philosophy for the carrying on of biblical study, and that they hold this right philosophy?" He answers, "In fact they generally say nothing about the matter, and this strengthens the view that their criticism of the supposed philosophical preconceptions behind biblical criticism is simply irresponsible carping" (149). Cf. Barr's disparaging and outmoded remarks concerning the "meager studies of philosophical questions as I have been able to find in the conservative evangelical literature" (275). He notes that there has been some revival of interest in Christian philosophy of late, but he opines, "most likely nothing will ever come of this. There is not sufficient interest in live philosophical questioning within fundamentalism to generate any movement" (276). As we have mentioned (supra, 24–25), however, analytic philosophy offers a philosophical method that can be of great utility for biblical studies. A conceptual argument linking scriptural inspiration to inerrancy would be a respectable procedure.

172 Barr, Fundamentalism, 277.

173 Barr, Fundamentalism, 277.

174 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 19. Cf. Abraham, Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture, 31–32, who identifies four arguments

based on the teaching of Jesus, the teaching of Scripture as a whole, the very idea of inspiration itself, and the idea of biblical authority. Abraham subordinates, wrongly I think, the arguments from the teaching of Jesus and from the teaching of Scripture to the argument from the idea of inspiration. It is not the idea of inspiration but rather scriptural teaching about inspiration that entails Scripture's truthfulness.

175 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 23.

176 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 52.

177 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 23; so also Abraham, Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture, 32, but without verbal inspiration.

178 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 53; cf. 120.

179 Daniel P. Fuller, “On Revelation and Biblical Authority,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 16, no. 2 (1973): 68.

180 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 48.

181 Davis, Debate about the Bible, 88.

182 Geisler, Systematic Theology, 1:248.

183 Barr, Fundamentalism, 74.

184 Barr, Fundamentalism, 76.

185 Barr also criticizes conservative evangelicals for saying that “Jesus made ‘claims' about himself: he ‘claimed' to be the Messiah, he ‘claimed' to be God, he ‘claimed' that his teaching had absolute truth” (Barr, Fundamentalism, 77). Barr protests, “On the one hand, this picture completely ignores the complex and indirect character of Jesus' self-presentation in the gospels; on the other it is possible only on fundamentalist assumptions, since the making of ‘claims' of this sort is exactly what Jesus does not do except in limited and often marginal texts” (77). Barr's overreaction seems to be based on loading the word “claim” with excessive weight. Not only is it universally recognized by NT scholars that the historical Jesus explicitly claimed that in his person the Kingdom of God was drawing

near, but the idea of implicit Christology is widely accepted today among NT scholars with regard to Jesus' sayings and actions, that is to say, his claims to divine authority are implicit in his teaching and activity, such as his healings and exorcisms. Far from being limited and marginal, such claims are pervasive throughout Jesus' ministry.

186 See Rainer Riesner, Jesus als Lehrer, 3rd ed. WUNT II/7 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988). There are, in fact, quite a few scholarly books entitled Jesus as Teacher.

187 Barr, Fundamentalism, 76. This charitable interpretation still does not explain, however, Barr's allegation that fundamentalists “show little understanding of what kerygma is or can be and treats it as if it were the teaching of divinely authorized ‘views'” (77). We have already seen that II Timothy distinguishes between kerygma and teaching and affirms the importance of the latter for preserving true doctrine. How such doctrines could not be views escapes me.

188 Barr, Fundamentalism, 73.

189 Orr, Revelation and Inspiration, 199. According to Pinnock, “Most defenders of inerrancy, following Warfield, understand inerrancy relative to the intention of the text, not absolutely of every detail. In this view, there are errors in the Bible, but they do not overthrow inerrancy because they do not belong to the intended, but only the unintended teachings of the Bible” (Pinnock, “Three Views,” 63–64). Since “unintended teachings” is an oxymoron, Pinnock should have said “do not belong to the intended teachings, but only the incidental statements, of the Bible.” Elsewhere Pinnock advises concerning such false details, “we ought to be firmly persuaded that the detail, though part of the formulation of the text, is not part of its teaching, and we must be able to defend that view with a reasonable exegetical argument” (C. Pinnock. “Inspiration and Authority: A Truce Proposal,” The Other Side [May–June 1976]: 64).

190 Geisler, Systematic Theology, 1:238.

191 Geisler, Systematic Theology, 1:238.

192 Swinburne, Revelation, 7, 28.

193 Swinburne, Revelation, 99–100.

194 Although Swinburne goes on to argue that in addition to the original documents there would need to be a church which could provide continuing interpretive guidance by translating the original revelation for cultures presupposing other scientific worldviews, such as Greek culture with its spherical and everlasting Earth, this is clearly not a necessary condition of the original documents' being revelatory or inspired but is merely a matter of the revelation's ongoing relevance. Swinburne, unfortunately, does not identify Christian revelation with Scripture but with the doctrine developed by the later Christian church.

195 Swinburne, Revelation, 265.

196 Richard Swinburne, “What Does the Old Testament Mean?,” in Divine Evil? The Moral Character of the God of Abraham, ed. Michael Bergmann, Michael J. Murray, and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 209–225.

197 In Revelation Swinburne provides no examples of such falsities or morally unacceptable statements; but the examples cited here are provided in personal correspondence in response to my request. “For examples of obvious scientific and historical falsities I suggest Genesis 2 (with its account of the origin of the first woman), and Genesis 7–11 (with its claim that all animal and human life, apart from that saved in a very small ark, was eliminated by a flood which happened … only a few thousand years ago)… . As regards God commanding immoral conduct or behaving immorally Psalm 137.9 would be the obvious example” (Richard Swinburne to William Lane Craig, Sept. 11, 2020).

198 To my mind, the description of God's creation of woman from Adam's rib (side) is obviously figurative, as is the creation of Adam himself by an anthropomorphically described deity; indeed, the whole of Gen 1–11 plausibly belongs to the genre of mytho-history, if not mythology, and therefore need not be taken literally. See Thorkild

Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” [1981], in “I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood”: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, Sources for Biblical and Theological Studies (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 140; Bill T. Arnold, “The Genesis Narratives,” in Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources, ed. Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 31. We shall have more to say momentarily about the imprecatory Psalms, but for now it suffices to note that such Psalms neither describe divine behavior nor issue divine commands but are expressions of the Psalmist's own feelings.

199 Swinburne, Revelation, 265. For example, Origen De principiis 4.3.5 writes, “with respect to holy Scripture, our opinion is that the whole of it has a ‘spiritual,' but not the whole a ‘bodily' meaning, because the bodily meaning is in many places proved to be impossible.” Augustine writes, “whatever there is in the word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative” (De doctrina Christiana 3.10).

200 Swinburne, Revelation, 285.

201 Swinburne, Revelation, 267, citing Beryl Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), 14.

202 Swinburne, Revelation, 286–287. Once again, however, Swinburne gives us no examples. One might suspect that he is referring to theologians of the old Princeton school like Hodge and Warfield, but then his characterization of their view would be a caricature, since they were not literalists. Rather he explains that he had in mind “Church leaders and preachers [who] were taking claims about the time, place, and details of events recorded in the early chapters of Genesis, such as details of geography and the ages of patriarchs totally literally, and hoping to find bits of the Ark somewhere in Turkey” (Richard Swinburne to William Lane Craig, Sept. 11, 2020). Recall that Swinburne agrees with such popularizers that the meaning of the original texts was literal; but the

popularizers are said to err by equating the meaning of the canonical text with the meaning of the original texts.

203 Swinburne, Revelation, 287.

204 Swinburne, Revelation, 265.

205 See our discussion under the locus De creatione. That the days of creation are metaphorical is already evident in the fact that the seventh day is not a literal day, since it lacks the closing formula “and it was evening and it was morning, a nth day,” indicating the ongoing nature of the seventh day, and from the fact that the succession of evening and morning precedes the creation of the sun on day four. The author could not have imagined that the primordial ocean of v. 9 drained away in 24 hours; indeed, after the flood returns the Earth to its primordial state the waters take a year to fully subside (Gen 8.13). Neither could he have imagined the Earth's bringing forth plants bearing seed and fruit (v. 11) and animals (v. 24) in two consecutive 24 hour days, as if viewed in time lapse photography! The characterization of the skies as a raqia‘ (firmament) (v. 8), when read against its ANE background, is, like the “windows of heaven” (7.11), clearly metaphorical. No one knows how to interpret the extraordinarily long lifespans of the antediluvians (5.4–32) but their unrealistic lengths are plausibly meant to underline the antiquity of humanity; it is significant that the author never sums them together to arrive at an age of the Earth.

206 Swinburne, Revelation, 243, 250; cf. what he has to say on 64–69 about different kinds of fables.

207 Swinburne, Revelation, 250–251.

208 Read in context, Smalley's cited statement about Origenist influence is not principally about the handling of problematic texts but the tendency, flowing from Philo and Origen, to read Scripture in an allegorical as well as literal sense (Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, 3–14). Moreover, she proceeds to explain how in the East the Antiochean school, whose influence in the West was eventually eclipsed, opposed the allegorical interpretation.

209 Smalley remarks, “Reading Philo, one has the sensation of stepping ‘through the Looking Glass'. One finds, as did Alice, a country governed by queer laws which the inhabitants oddly regard as rational. In order to understand medieval Bible study one must live there long enough to slip into their ways and appreciate the logic of their strict, elaborately fantastic conventions” (Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, 5).

210 Here, for example, is Augustine's interpretation of the parable of the good Samaritan from his Quaestiones Evangeliorum 2.19:

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho; Adam himself is meant; Jerusalem is the heavenly city of peace, from whose blessedness Adam fell; Jericho means the moon, and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies. Thieves are the devil and his angels. Who stripped him, namely, of his immortality; and beat him, by persuading him to sin; and left him half-dead, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead; he is therefore called half-dead. The priest and Levite who saw him and passed by, signify the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament which could profit nothing for salvation. Samaritan means Guardian, and therefore the Lord Himself is signified by this name. The binding of the wounds is the restraint of sin. Oil is the comfort of good hope; wine the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The beast is the flesh in which He deigned to come to us. The being set upon the beast is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The inn is the Church,

where travelers returning to their heavenly country are refreshed after pilgrimage. The morrow is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that which is to come. The innkeeper is the Apostle (Paul). The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him ‘to live by the gospel’” (Cited by C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961], 1–2).

211 Swinburne, Revelation, 109.

212 See, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa's treatise On Virginity.

213 See a similar emphasis by Rea, “Authority and Truth,” 890–891, who distinguishes the message of a text from its semantic meaning.

214 For example, Bavinck declares, “The split between ‘that which is needed for salvation' and ‘the incidentally historical' is impossible, since in Scripture doctrine and history are completely intertwined. The distinction fails to do justice to the consciousness of the authors, who certainly did not limit their authority to the religious-ethical dimension but extended it to the whole content of their writings” (Bavinck, Reformed Dogmatics, 1:417). Henry is more circumspect: “Verbal inerrancy implies that truth attaches not only to the theological and ethical teaching of the Bible, but also to historical and scientific matters insofar as they are part of the express message of the inspired writings. The Genesis creation account has implications for God's causal relationship to the cosmos; the Exodus narrative teaches the historical flight of the Hebrews from Egypt; the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth and resurrection describe factual events in the external world” (Henry, God, Revelation and Authority, 4:205).

215 James D. G. Dunn, Jesus Remembered (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 249. Dunn rejects a stratigraphic model of the Gospels' formation, according to which the Gospels are the top layer of repeatedly revised prior layers of tradition. Instead, he thinks that each oral performance of the stories incorporated in the Gospels places us in immediate contact with the primitive traditions about Jesus, which could be told variously without prejudice to their stable elements. For a somewhat different approach, see Michael R. Licona, Why Are There Differences in the Gospels? What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography, with a Foreword by Craig A. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), who argues on the basis of a comparative analysis of Plutarch's Lives that ancient biographers and historical writers employed compositional techniques such as transferal, compression, displacement, and so on, that gave a good degree of malleability to their accounts, techniques which are also employed in the Gospel biographies of Jesus. Even on a stratigraphic model, then, the salient point remains that the Evangelists, despite their fundamental reliability, are not concerned with exacting historical accuracy with respect to secondary details.

216 Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 223.

217 Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 224.

218 Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 249; cf. 254.

219 Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 768.

220 Although Dunn does not examine this tradition, he does say with respect to it, “The differing tellings as to detail and setting within the larger story… are typical of performance variation” (Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 774).

221 Johnston M. Cheney, The Life of Christ in Stereo: The Four Gospels Combined as One, ed. Stanley A. Ellisen (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1969), 218–220.

222 Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 828–832.

223 Stephen T. Davis, “Scripture, Tradition, and Theological Authority,” in Christian Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 280. Pinnock muses:

“Inerrancy, as applied by many of its scholarly exponents, is actually hedged about by numerous exceptions. A purported ‘error'… must belong to the intended assertions of Scripture. Inerrancy is a somewhat untestable and unfalsifiable assertion. We could say that because the writers of Samuel did not intend to give us a chronologically perfect account of the history of Israel, the errors in Samuel do not invalidate biblical inerrancy. But what is gained talking in this way? Why speak of inerrancy if errors are fairly easily accommodated to it?” (Pinnock, “Three Views,” 64–65).

Pinnock nonetheless defends “inerrancy” as “a strong, excellent term when properly used” (68). Davis prefers to say that the Bible is infallible, that is, it does not mislead us in matters that are crucially relevant to Christian faith and practice. Such a notion could well face similar worries, I suspect, with respect to ethical questions, as Swinburne rightly sees (Revelation, chap. 11, “Moral Teaching”). Davis mentions specifically as challenges to infallibility Paul's apparent sexism, the relationship between election and human freedom, and Jesus' apparent belief that the Parousia would occur within the lifetime of his listeners (Davis, Debate about the Bible, 116).

224 Dunn, Jesus Remembered, 826.

225 For example, the doctrine of temporal creatio ex nihilo is empirically verifiable, as we shall see in the locus De creatione, but it is not falsifiable, since God could have created a steady state universe out of nothing at some time in the finite past. It does not need to be said that the falsification principle of meaning has, like its predecessor the verification principle of meaning, gone the way of all flesh.

226 Thus, Helm rightly emphasizes that falsifiability is relative to literary genre, some being much more susceptible to falsification than others (Helm, “Idea of Inerrancy,” 917).

227 Swinburne, Revelation, v–vi.

228 For a concise summary of Swinburne's own natural theology, see Swinburne, Revelation, 80.

229 See this Systematic Philosophical Theology, vol. IIa, De Deo, pt. I: Attributa Dei 9: Goodness.

230 Swinburne, Revelation, 103. Although Swinburne goes on to assert the need for an interpreting church of God's initial revelation, we need not go so far. If the initial revelation is sufficiently clear, then such an interpreting authority will be unnecessary. The church may be necessary simply to preserve the initial revelation as well as to provide a believing community. Recall that for Swinburne it is Christian doctrine as developed by church teaching, not the Scripture, which is identified with divine revelation. Since our concern is with Scripture, we may pull up at this point without affirming or denying the church's interpreting role.

231 Swinburne, Revelation, 3.

232 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology. 2:334–235, 343–345.

233 So Orr, Revelation and Inspiration, 158–159: “there is an objective revelation in divine acts and words prior to any written record.”

234 Nor scripturally; see William J. Abraham, “The Epistemological Significance of the Inner Witness of the Holy Spirit,” Faith and Philosophy 7, no. 4 (1990): 443.

235 For a religious application of “experiencing as” see Hick, Philosophy of Religion, 61–63.

236 On properly basic beliefs see the locus De fide.

237 See the Prolegomena with respect to the collapse of classical foundationalism.

238 Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 350.

239 For this distinction see again De fide.

240 For the distinction between justification and warrant, see De fide.

241 Swinburne, Revelation, 172.

242 Swinburne, Revelation, 172.

243 Earlier Swinburne had offered the weak argument that “Holy Scripture must be regarded… as no more than a true record of a revelation which existed before it” because without prior revelation there could have been no Christians during the first four centuries AD (Swinburne, Revelation, 137). The NT need not be the “original revelation” rather than additional revelation, supplementing the OT and recording and elaborating the teaching of Jesus.

244 Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture,” 27.

245 Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture,” 20.

246 Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture,” 20.

247 Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture,” 21.

248 Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture,” 25.

249 Swinburne, “Authority of Scripture,” 26.

250 Thomas M. Crisp, “On Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” in Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 186–213. Note that Crisp's concern is not with revelation but with Scripture.

251 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 204, 205.

252 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 203.

253 McDonald rightly points out, “All of the current biblical canons are sufficient for Christian faith and all are in agreement on the essential identity of Jesus, faith, the identity and activity of God, as well as the church's identity and mission. They do not tell us everything we want to know, but they all adequately inform Christian faith” (McDonald, New Testament, 356).

254 He speaks, for example, of “matters pertaining to the extent of the scriptures” and “the question what the extent of the scriptures is” (Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 205).

255 “The process works something like this: one hears the gospel preached, evinces an openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit and thereupon has belief in the great things of the gospel produced in one by the Holy Spirit” (Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 205).

256 Crisp considers an account of this sort, but persists in his second worry: What shall we say, for example, about Catholic and Orthodox belief in the inspiration of the deuterocanonical books? Crisp avers, “Though it's hard to be sure, one suspects that, ‘downstream of experience,' belief in the inspiration of the deuterocanonical books is quite similar to belief in the inspiration of, say, the Gospel of Matthew. So we've dissimilar explanations of what would seem to be very similar phenomena and consequent theoretical cost” (Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 206). I suspect that even Catholics and Orthodox would not make such an equation, and given our unanimity about the inspiration of the NT, which we all consider to contain the fullness of divine revelation, any theoretical cost seems small.

257 Blomberg observes that “Almost nothing, though, has addressed in any detail the question of the authenticity of the texts needed to establish the historical Jesus' perspective on the inspiration or authority of the Bible of his world,” a deficit Blomberg seeks to fill (Craig Blomberg, “Reflections on Jesus' View of the Old Testament,” in The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures, ed. Donald A. Carson [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016], 671–672).

258 Barr, Fundamentalism, 73. Again, “As all would agree, the Old Testament enjoyed a very high status in the minds of Jesus and the early Christians, being understood as the Word of God and the authoritative expression of his will” (82). Thus, Schrenk writes, “According to the later Jewish view, Scripture has sacred, authoritative and normative significance. It is of permanent and unassailable validity. As the dictate of God, it is given by His Spirit. This view referred originally to the Pentateuch but was then transferred to the Prophets and Writings. The implication of the doctrine of inspiration is that the revealed truth of God characterizes every word” (Schrenk, “γραφή,” 755). According to McDonald, “The only question for the majority of NT scholars is which Scriptures Jesus used or cited” (McDonald, Old Testament, 337).

259 In an effort to go beyond Hodge and Warfield's and Wenham's appeal to sayings and actions of the canonical Jesus, Blomberg argues that “Jesus' teaching and behavior vis-à-vis the Hebrew Scriptures satisfies the delicate balances of double similarity and dissimilarity with both the Judaism of his day and with the Christianity that quickly developed after him, so that we may rest confident that we are dealing with authentic, bedrock historical-Jesus material here… . When it comes to the inspiration, truthfulness, authority, and relevance of the Bible of

his world, Jesus could scarcely have held to higher views” (Blomberg, “Jesus' View of the Old Testament,” 696). Note that Blomberg does not in fact show that the thus established authentic sayings of Jesus belong to the teaching of Jesus.

260 Cf. Letter of Aristeas 313, where it is reported that the Jewish legislation “is sacred and has come about through God”; also Josephus Antiquities of the Jews 12.37.

261 While Josephus does not list the scriptural books, it is striking that when the Jewish canon was later officially ratified, the number of books was 22, suggesting that in the first century a sort of unofficial, de facto Hebrew canon already existed. McDonald disputes this, claiming that the number 22 was an artificial device mandated by the

number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet (cf. Jubilees 2.23–24), which required combining some books (McDonald, Old Testament, 341–352). But that goes no distance toward making it probable that the Scriptures known to Josephus differed radically from the later canonized books; on the contrary, it seems likely that the collections were largely combinations of the same books. That Greek-speaking Christians of the second century and beyond cited the deutero-canonical books in the Septuagint in contrast to Jesus hardly seems surprising, as McDonald claims (299). Moreover, if the use of alphabetic numbers focuses more on Scripture's sacredness than the specific identity and number of the books (475), that only goes to underline the salient point being made here of Scripture's authority. McDonald observes, “There is no question about the authority of the Jewish Scriptures among the earliest followers of Jesus, not only for understanding the life and ministry of Jesus, but also as an authoritative guide for their conduct and mission. This was true even though the boundaries of the canon had not yet been fully decided” (332).

262 Although McDonald, Old Testament, chap. 9: “The Scriptures of Jesus and Early Christianity,” tries hard to make out a case that Jesus knew and alluded to extra-biblical books and “likely” regarded them as Scripture (298), his argument is significantly overextended. Curiously, McDonald himself admits that “There is no evidence that Jesus specifically read extra-biblical books,” much less regarded them as Scripture; but he insists that “there are a number of parallel words, phrases, and ideas from them in his teachings that are suggestive of that” (298). Here we should do well to keep in mind the warning of Samuel Sandmel that the identification of literary parallels and drawing a genealogical connection between them is a very difficult and uncertain business (Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” Journal of Biblical Literature 81, no. 1 [1962]: 1–13). The alleged parallels McDonald adduces between Jesus' sayings and extra-biblical books (302–303; 339–340) consist of similar motifs or, at best, mere phrases without context whose parallelism remains conjectural, e.g., “formerly you were spiritual, (having) eternal life,

and immortal in all the generations of the world. That is why (formerly) I did not make wives for you, for the dwelling of spiritual beings of heaven is heaven" (I Enoch 15.6–7) and "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mk 12.25). There is no evidence for the further inferences that Jesus knew first-hand the works in question as books, much less that he regarded them as divine Scripture. The expressions in question could have been "common elements in Judaism in the first century known by Jesus" (306), just as expressions of the Authorized Version and Shakespeare pervade English without indicating the user's familiarity with the original works. Moreover, "There is general agreement among scholars that quoting or citing a particular document does not mean that a writer considered what was quoted or cited to be sacred and inspired Scripture" (299). McDonald thus makes all the necessary caveats but cannot resist overreaching in his conclusions.

263 Barr, Fundamentalism, 81. Why do evangelicals like Blomberg fail to address this step of the argument? I think that it is because they naturally assume that "If we are followers of Jesus, we will want to adopt his view of the Scriptures. He believed in their fully divine origin, reliability, and authority. Therefore, our view of the Old Testament should accept their complete God-given trustworthiness and claims on our lives as well" (Blomberg, "Jesus' View of the Old Testament," 699). This assumption raises the important Christological question, to which we shall return in the sequel, whether Jesus could have held false beliefs that were not part of his teaching.

264 Stephen Davis, despite his denial of inerrancy in favor of infallibility, too rashly says regarding the Bible's testimony to its own reliability, "the historicity of events and figures described in the Old Testament is taken for granted," including Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the flood, Sodom and Lot's wife, manna in the Sinai, the brass serpent, and Jonah and the great fish (Davis, Debate about the Bible, 59). Technically, Davis too readily assumes that taking something for granted is the same as teaching that thing.

265 This is especially evident in NT authors' illustrative use of pseudepigraphal and apocryphal figures like Jannes and Jambres. Blomberg allows, “Theoretically, when Jesus referred to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, he could have been referring to when the character Moses did so in the account in Numbers, irrespective of its actual historicity.” But Blomberg protests that when Jesus warned his generation about imminent punishment for the cumulative sins of their ancestors who killed God's faithful followers from Abel to Zechariah, he must have believed that “the sizable majority of ‘historical books' and their contents were in fact historical” (Blomberg, “Jesus' View of the Old Testament,” 697). Actually, the example cited (Lk 11.50–51) is a paradigmatic case of the use of literary figures. Commentators have often remarked that what is surveyed here is not the history of the world but the history of the OT canon (e.g., I. Howard Marshall, Commentary on Luke, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1978], 506). Jesus is talking about the literary history of the OT and the literary bookends of it. Belief in the sinful history of Israel does not imply Blomberg's sweeping conclusion.

The best case that can be made for moving from a literary to a historical reference will be when some detail about the person is added which is not true-in-the-story. For example, Wenham points to Jesus' statements that the Ninevites will arise at the judgement and condemn his generation (Mt 12.41) and that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgement for Sodom than for Jesus' compatriots (Mt 11.23–24). Quoting T. T. Perowne, Wenham asks incredulously, are we “to suppose him to say that imaginary persons who at the imaginary preaching of an imaginary prophet repented in imagination, shall rise up in that day and condemn the actual impenitence of those his actual hearers”? (Wenham, Christ and the Bible, 15; so also Blomberg, “Jesus' View of the Old Testament,”697n114). Even in these cases, however, one needs to reckon with the possibility of religious hyperbole, just as when Jesus pronounces woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida because if the

mighty works done in them had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago (Mt 11.21).

266 See Blomberg, “Jesus' View of the Old Testament,” passim.

267 Donald A. Hagner, The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of Modern Jewish Study of Jesus, with a Foreword by Gösta Lindeskog (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 120-126. Robert Banks argues that Matthew's redaction of Jesus' words aims to soften their impact by emphasizing “the prophetic, and so provisional, function of the Mosaic legislation and to underline its realization and fulfilment in Christ's ministry… . It, therefore, becomes apparent that it is not so much Jesus' stance towards the Law that he is concerned to depict; it is how the Law stands with regard to him, as the one who brings it to fulfilment and to whom all attention must now be directed” (Robert Banks, “Matthew's Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17–20,” Journal of Biblical Literature 93, no. 2 [1974]: 242).

268 Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of John: A Commentary, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:829, with references.

269 Keener, Gospel of John, 2:829.

270 See Blomberg, “Jesus' View of the Old Testament,” 689 for discussion.

271 See C. A. Evans, “Did Jesus Predict His Death and Resurrection?” in Resurrection, ed. S. E. Porter, M. A. Hayes, and D. Tombs, JSNTSup 186/RILP 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 82–97. Evans notes not only (i) Mark's primitive phrasing meta treis hēmeras, but also (ii) John the Baptist's execution, which portended Jesus' fate, (iii) Jesus' anxiety-ridden prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, too awkward to be inauthentic, (iv) the absence of the Parousia from the predictions, and (v) the historical context of Jewish martyrdoms. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem in deliberate fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (Zech 9.9–10), which set the ball rolling that would crush him in the end, is independently

attested in Mark and John and maybe as well in Matthew and Luke's special sources M and L.

272 Horst Georg Pöhlmann, Abriss der Dogmatik, 3rd rev. ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1966), 230.

273 Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Jesu Geschichte und unsere Geschichte,” in Glaube und Wirklichkeit (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1975), 92–94.

274 John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, vol. 3, Companions and Competitors (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 128–147.

275 Meier, Companions and Competitors, 154–163.

276 Meier, Companions and Competitors, 157.

277 Meier, Companions and Competitors, 157.

278 See discussion by Meier, Companions and Competitors, 135–138, who argues that the criteria of coherence, discontinuity, and embarrassment all support the saying's authenticity.

279 On the authenticity and meaning of Jesus' words at the Last Supper see discussion by Joachim Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, trans. Norman Perrin (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), chap. 5; Brant Pitre, Jesus and the Last Supper (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), chap. 5.

280 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 268–280.

281 Timothy McGrew, “Has Plantinga Refuted the Historical Argument?” Philosophia Christi 6 (2004): 7–26. See further Alvin Plantinga, “Historical Arguments and Historical Probabilities: A Response to Timothy McGrew,” Philosophia Christi 8 (2006): 7–22; Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, “On the Historical Argument: A Rejoinder to Plantinga,” Philosophia Christi 8 (2006): 23–38. See also Richard Swinburne, “Natural Theology, Its ‘Dwindling Probabilities,' and ‘Lack of Rapport',” Faith and Philosophy 21 (2004): 533–546; Swinburne, Revelation, Appendix: 354–356.

Plantinga agreed with McGrew's analysis and insisted that he was objecting merely to the way Swinburne had originally formulated his argument, which Plantinga thought was subject to the problem of dwindling probabilities. Swinburne in reply said that his intention was to offer a probability argument along McGrew's lines.

282 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 192–193.

283 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 193.

284 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 193.

285 C. Behan McCullagh, Justifying Historical Descriptions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 19.

286 Timothy J. McGrew and John M. DePoe, “Natural Theology and the Uses of Argument,” Philosophia Christi 15, no 2 (2013): 299–309.

287 McGrew, “Has Plantinga Refuted?” 18. As Lydia McGrew explains, if theism has a merely modest probability aside from the consideration of the specific evidence for the resurrection, and if the resurrection has a very high probability once that evidence is taken into account, then the evidence for the resurrection itself must have a robust, positive impact upon the probability of theism (Lydia McGrew, “Of Generic Gods and Generic Men: The Limits of Armchair Philosophy of Religion,” Journal of Analytic Theology 6 [May 2018], 185).

288 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 200–201. The theism spoken of here is not Christian theism but so-called “minimal theism,” the doctrine that there exists some god or other, some powerful, non-physical person capable of interacting causally with the physical world (197).

289 For a clear account, see McGrew, “Generic Gods and Generic Men,” 185.

290 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 198.

291 McGrew, “Generic Gods and Generic Men,” 187.

292 Richard Swinburne, The Resurrection of God Incarnate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 212–213.

293 McGrew, “Generic Gods and Generic Men,” 189.

294 McGrew, “Generic Gods and Generic Men,” 189.

295 Thomas Crisp to William Lane Craig, August 11, 2020.

296 Thomas Crisp to William Lane Craig, August 10, 2020.

297 See Lee Martin McDonald, “Recognizing Christian Religious Texts as Scripture,” in John J. Collins, Craig A. Evans, and Lee Martin McDonald, Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures: New Developments in Canon Controversy (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2020), 97–120. McDonald explains that inspiration was a prerequisite for canonicity. No writing could have been included in the NT canon had it not been regarded as inspired. But inspiration was not evidence of canonicity, but an implication (or corollary) of canonicity (110). When it came to recognizing a book as canonical, the principal criteria were apostolicity, orthodoxy, antiquity, catholicity, and adaptability (Lee Martin McDonald, “Forming Christian Scriptures as a Biblical Canon,” in Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures, 131). Foremost among these was apostolicity. Collins, McDonald, and Evans point out that the authorial claims of the NT apocrypha show that “literature thought to derive from an apostle – and in some cases from Jesus himself – was believed to be authoritative” (“Conclusion,” in Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures, 196). They explain:

“Unlike the writings that the early church accepted as authoritative, some of which are anonymous or at least make no explicit interior claim of apostolic authorship, the extracanonical writings – gospels, books of acts, letters, and apocalypses – almost always make an explicit claim of apostolic authorship and sometimes even claim to have been composed by Jesus himself (before or after the

resurrection). These explicit and exaggerated claims were often recognized, even in antiquity, as indicators of pseudepigraphy. Of course, apostolic claims of authorship did not always imply the intent to gain canonical status …, but they sometimes did" ("Conclusion," 197).

The Church Fathers did not treat such claims to apostolicity uncritically but weighed them. "The early church, as seen in explicit statements in the writings of the Fathers as well as in the canon lists, did not regard these explicit claims as decisive, and that also applies to the so-called NT antilegomena …, whose claims of apostolic authorship, as in the case of 1 and 2 Peter, did not silence opposition and criticism" ("Conclusion," 197).

Evans raises the provocative question: Should the New Testament be updated? He answers negatively:

"The early church's decisions on which books are authoritative… were not made in haste. Arguments for and against were heard, differences of opinion were aired, and eventually decisions were made. In the end, the church opted for what might be described as a 'minimal' canon, including only writings of which almost everyone approved. Informed, critical review of the church's decision, in light of historical and archaeological verisimilitude, strongly supports the conclusion that the church decided wisely" (Craig A. Evans, "The Gospels of Peter and Thomas," in Ancient Jewish and Christian Scriptures, 193).

He concludes, "The old New Testament has been read and studied for two millennia, and it has served the church well. I am confident that will continue" ("Gospels of Peter and Thomas," 193).

298 Thomas Crisp to William Lane Craig, August 10, 2020; cf. Crisp, "Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired," 201.

299 Elizabeth Jackson, “How Low Can You Go? A Defense of Believing Philosophical Theories,” in Attitude in Philosophy, ed. Sanford Goldberg and Mark Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). See also Elizabeth Jackson, “On the Independence of Belief and Credence,” Philosophical Issues 32, no. 1 (2022): 9–31.

300 Jackson, “How Low Can You Go?”

301 For a somewhat similar approach see Angus Ritchie, “The Role of the Church in Discerning the Testimony of the Spirit,” in The Testimony of the Spirit: New Essays, ed. R. Douglas Geivett and Paul K. Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 244–262, who emphasizes that discerning the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Scripture has a social dimension.

302 Crisp, “Believing that the Scriptures Are Divinely Inspired,” 202.

303 This is not to say that they wrote with a consciousness of writing inspired Scripture (McDonald, “Recognizing Christian Religious Texts,” 106–19).

304 I am grateful to Thomas Crisp, Stephen T. Davis, Craig Evans, Elizabeth Jackson, Michael Licona, Lee McDonald, and Lydia McGrew for comments and/or discussion of issues pertinent to this locus.

LOCUS IIDe Fide

capítulo

Faith is central to the Judeo-Christian tradition as to no other. “Without it,” one has rightly observed, “it is impossible to do justice to Christian understandings of the relationship between God and humanity.”1 Two principal philosophical questions arise when we consider the doctrine of faith: (1) What is the nature of faith? And (2) What rational justification can be given for faith?2 As we shall see, these questions must not be conflated, lest confusion result.

1 The Nature of Faith

In recent years Christian philosophers have produced a burgeoning literature on the nature of faith.3 As is typical among analytic philosophers, their treatment of faith almost always proceeds along the lines of analysis of ordinary language expressions of faith and personal intuitions about faith. Many have then sought to apply the results of such analysis specifically to Christian faith.

Such a procedure is, however, all too quick. It cannot be uncritically assumed that an analysis of generic faith is directly applicable to Christian faith.4 Not that Christian faith involves a cognitive attitude other than what typically passes for faith in everyday affairs; while that may be the case, the more fundamental problem is that since the object of Christian faith is principally God, it may be that God has placed certain conditions on what counts as acceptable faith in his sight.5 Here the systematic theologian will exploit the considerable advantage that Christians enjoy of having God's revelation in inspired Scripture as a guide to understanding the nature of Christian faith. By turning to the authoritative teaching of Scripture concerning faith, we avoid much of the uncertainty and subjectivity endemic to analyses based solely on ordinary language and personal intuition.6 Unfortunately, for whatever reason, most Christian philosophers writing on the nature of faith largely neglect the teaching of Scripture concerning faith, contenting themselves with at most quoting a passage or two of Scripture to ratify the results of their independent analysis of faith. So flawed a methodology threatens to deliver a theologically inadequate understanding of the nature of Christian faith.

Right at the outset, then, it is important to distinguish between secular faith, for example, faith in one's dentist or faith that one's son will return from war, and Christian faith or saving faith (fides salvifica), the sort of faith spoken of in Eph 2.8: "By grace you have been saved through faith."7 By saving faith we mean the sort of faith which is instrumental to salvation, the sort of faith which is required

for salvation.8 Secular models of faith, such as preoccupy Christian philosophers, cannot be assumed to be theologically relevant insofar as saving faith is concerned. We must rather turn to the teaching of Scripture to determine the nature of saving faith.

1.1 Scriptural Teaching

In the OT the most important words in the vocabulary of faith are all derivatives from the Hebrew root ’mn and have a wide variety of meanings: the verb ’āman, meaning to be faithful, to trust, to believe; the noun ’ĕmûnâ, meaning faith or faithfulness, and the noun ’ĕmet, meaning reliability or truth. These are obviously deeply relational notions, emphasizing personal relationships of loyalty and trust involving both God and man. All forms of ’mn, writes Jepsen, “are quite predominantly personal, i.e., are used in connection with man and God. While they have a negative ring when used of man, they are used of God absolutely: God is and has ’emeth, he acts in ’emuunah, his word is ne’emān, and therefore demands he’emin.”9

But we should be remiss if we did not take cognizance of the fact that faith is not always reposed exclusively in persons in the OT. Rather to have faith sometimes means to believe that ____.10 Although the verb ’āman when used in its niphal form ne’ĕmān means to be faithful, reliable, and constant, ’āman when used in the hiphil form he’ĕmîn, especially in connection with a message or a report, means to believe some fact or proposition.11 The following are examples of this use of he’ĕmîn:

> And he [Abraham] believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness (Gen 15.6).
>
> And they told him [Jacob], “Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” And his heart fainted, for he did not believe them (Gen 45.26).

Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’” (Ex 4.1).

“that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you” (Ex 4.5).

“If they will not believe you,” God said, “or heed the first sign, they may believe the latter sign” (Ex 4.8).

And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and take possession of the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and did not believe him or obey his voice (Deut 9.23).

“but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it; and behold, the half was not told me; your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report which I heard” (I Kgs 10.7; cf. II Chr 9.6).

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! (Ps 27.13).

Then they believed his words; they sang his praise (Ps 106.12).

Who has believed what we have heard? (Is 53.1a).

In these examples he’ĕmîn is sometimes directed towards some fact or towards someone’s words, such as a report or a promise. Even when believing a person is in view, what is clearly implied is that one (dis)believes what that person says, a propositional claim. Abraham’s believing God is especially noteworthy in this respect, given the central role his faith plays in both Judaism and Christianity. While Abraham doubtless trusted in God, he also believed God’s promise that his descendants should be as numerous as the stars of heaven (Gen 15.5). It is not fortuitous that the LXX translators chose pisteuein to render render he’ĕmîn and that English translators consistently translate he’ĕmîn in such passages as “believe.”

Obviously, more important for our interest in Christian saving faith is the NT witness to faith. There is an explosion in the frequency of faith-words in the NT. Despite its much larger size, the Hebrew Bible employs ’āman only 96 times and ’ĕmûnâ 49 times, whereas the smaller NT employs pisteuein 241 times and pistis 242 times, along with many cognates. The NT term for faith pistis has many different meanings, such as trust, trustworthiness, honesty, credibility, faithfulness, good faith, confidence, assurance, pledge, guarantee, credit, proof, credence, belief, position of trust/trusteeship, legal trust, protection, and security.12 Given so wide a semantic range, the word and its cognates thus pose a real challenge for NT translators. Teresa Morgan remarks:

Sometimes, undoubtedly, a particular passage requires a particular sense of a term, but often we cannot be certain what meaning is intended, and often that is for the good reason that more than one meaning is in play. It is in the nature of complex terms to be multivalent, not only in dictionaries but in use… . sometimes the most satisfactory interpretation of a passage will depend on there being more than one meaning involved.13

Sometimes which meaning is in play will be clear. For example, while the pistis exemplified by a human being might be his trust in God or his faithfulness to God, obviously the pistis of God is not his trust but his faithfulness. On the other hand, there has been considerable debate whether pistis Christou should be translated as “Christ’s faithfulness” or as “faith in Christ.” Complicating the problem considerably is the fact that “faith” and “to have faith,” as ordinary language analyses have shown, are often loaded terms in English, carrying nuances which should not be imported uncritically into the Greek (much as we saw earlier with the words “revelation” and “to reveal”14). For that reason it would be naïve to translate every occurrence of the verb pisteuein as “to have faith,” as though the verb had a uniform meaning which maps smoothly onto the English expression.15

Pistis or its cognates are to be found in every NT book except the brief II Jn. Significantly, in sharp contrast to usage in the ambient Greco-Roman culture, such words are used in the NT almost exclusively of divine–human relationships as opposed to intra-human relationships. “By all but eliminating the forms of everyday, intra-human pistis which dominate Greek and Roman sources and are well represented in the Septuagint, Paul and other NT writers virtually redefine pistis as a divine–human relationship without an intra-human analogue.”16 Indeed, the essence of Christian salvation is to be found in such a relationship with God.17 Rom 1.16–17 state the theme for Paul’s letter to the church in Rome: “I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith [eis sōtērian panti tō pisteuonti], to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith [ek pisteōs eis pistin]; as it is written, “He who through faith [ek pisteōs] is righteous shall live.” However we understand Paul’s doctrine of salvation, what is clear is that faith is instrumental in obtaining it. In this Paul echoes the teaching of Jesus, who came on the scene, according to Mark’s Gospel, “preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe [pisteuete] in the gospel’” (Mk 1.14–15). Jesus’ healing miracles save (sōzein) their recipients (Mk 5.34; 10.52; Lk 8.50; 17.19; cf. Lk 7.50; 19.9–10), bringing not just physical but spiritual wellness, being accompanied by forgiveness of sins (Mk 2.5; Lk 7.48–50), accomplished though the faith of those involved (Mk 2.5; 5.36; Mt 8.13; 9.29; 15.28), in the absence of which nothing can be accomplished (Mk 6.5–6).

1.1.1 Saving Faith and Personal Faith

There is a scholarly consensus that the foundational meaning unifying the various meanings of pistis is trust/trustworthiness. In the NT such a relational faith is the heart of saving faith. Jesus called people to “Have faith in God [Echete pistin theou]” (Mk 11.22). Pisteuein with the prepositions en, eis, or epi is often used to convey

the notion of trust in or belief in someone. In John's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples "believe in God, believe also in me [pisteuete eis ton theon, kai eis eme pisteuete]" (Jn 14.1). John tells us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him [pas ho pisteuōn eis auton] should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3.16). In Acts salvation comes through faith in Jesus: "Believe in the Lord Jesus [pisteuson epi ton kyrion Iēsoun], and you will be saved" (Acts 16.31). Paul declares, "we have believed in Christ Jesus [eis Christon Iēsoun episteusamen], in order to be justified by faith in Christ [ek pisteōs Christou] and not by works of the law" (Gal 2.16). "Salvation though faith in Christ Jesus [sōtērian dia pisteōs tēs ev Christō Iēsou]" (II Tim 3.15) nicely epitomizes Christian faith.

The fact that saving faith is a relational faith involving trust in God forces us to draw a further distinction between such relational or personal faith and propositional faith.18 Although we shall return to the subject of personal faith in Christ when we discuss the doctrine of justification by faith under De gratia, we set it aside for now in order to consider propositional faith, which has been the focus of recent work by Christian philosophers.19 Propositional faith has as its object, not a person, but a proposition. It is the faith that p, where p takes some proposition as its value. The question is whether saving faith implies propositional faith, that is, whether a person must believe (pisteuein) certain theological propositions in order to be saved. Propositional belief may not be a constituent of saving faith, that relationship of trust in Christ, but the question is whether saving faith implies propositional faith along with personal faith.20

1.1.2 Saving Faith and Propositional Faith

An examination of the NT materials makes it clear that saving faith does imply propositional faith.

1.1.2.1 “Pisteuein hoti” and Propositional Faith

To begin with, there are theologically significant statements employing the expression pisteuein hoti [believe/trust that], which is a straightforward expression of propositional faith. Though few in comparison with the number of statements involving pisteuein + the dative or with the prepositions en, eis, and epi, sentences employing pisteuein hoti should not be overlooked. For example, Paul writes:

> If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that [pisteusēs en tē kardia sou hoti] God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart [pisteuetai] and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him [pas ho pisteuōn ep’ autō ou] will be put to shame’ (Rom 10.9–11).

Here Paul identifies the propositional belief God raised Jesus from the dead, as well as the confession “Jesus is Lord,” as central to salvation. Technically, what Paul states is a sufficient, not a necessary condition, of salvation; but Paul does not write as a logician and so should not be pressed for such precision. Consider I Cor 15.16–20 as an illustration of his loose style. Paul argues:

> If the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Paul’s argument appears to be:

- If the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised.
- If Christ has not been raised, various deleterious consequences result.

Christ has been raised.

Therefore, the dead are raised.

Therefore, the deleterious consequences do not result.

The inference of (4) follows logically from (1) and (3) by modus tollens. But technically (5) does not follow from (2) and (3), for (2) states a merely sufficient, but not a necessary, condition of the various deleterious consequences. To be rigorous, Paul's argument needs to specify necessary and sufficient conditions of the deleterious consequences:

2*. Various deleterious consequences result if and only if Christ has not been raised.

But it would be pedantic and the worst sort of logic-chopping to raise such an objection to Paul's reasoning. The expression "if and only if" would be extremely awkward in Greek,21 and Paul clearly assumes that if the dead are raised, then the deleterious consequences listed will not ensue.

In the same way, Paul doubtless does not think that the Romans might find salvation in some other way than confessing the Lordship of Jesus and believing in his resurrection from the dead.22 Only pedantry would require Paul to say, "If and only if you confess, etc." in order to express the essentiality to salvation of confession of Jesus' Lordship and belief in his resurrection.

John uses pisteuein hoti more than any other NT writer. Here are examples of theologically significant truths which for John are objects of propositional faith:

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to

know, that [pepisteukamen kai egnōkamen hoti] you are the Holy One of God” (Jn 6.68–69).

“You will die in your sins unless you believe that [pisteusēte hoti] I am he” (Jn 8.24).

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me [ho pisteuōn eis eme], though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me [pas ho zōn kai pisteuōn eis eme] shall never die. Do you believe this [pisteueis touto]?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that [pepisteuka hoti] you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world” (Jn 11.25–27).

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that [pisteusōsin hoti] thou didst send me” (Jn 11.41–42).

“I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that [pisteuēte hoti] I am he” (Jn 13.19).

“Do you not believe that [pisteueis hoti] I am in the Father and the Father in me? … Believe me that [pisteuete moi hoti] I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me [pisteuete moi] for the sake of the works themselves” (Jn 14.10–11).

“Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that [pisteuomen hoti] you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe [pisteuete]?” (Jn 16.30–31).

“I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that [episteusan hoti] thou didst send me” (Jn 17.8).

“I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me [tōn pisteuontōn eis eme] through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that [pisteuē hoti] thou hast sent me” (Jn 17.20–21).

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that [pisteuēte hoti] Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing [pisteuontes] you may have life in his name" (Jn 20.30–31).

Every one who believes that [pas ho pisteuōn hoti] Jesus is the Christ is a child of God (I Jn 5.1).

Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that [ho pisteuōn hoti] Jesus is the Son of God (I Jn 5.5)?

The propositional truths here affirmed lie at the heart of the Christian faith. The very purpose of the Gospel of John is to induce propositional faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, leading to salvation (zōē). Indeed, Jesus says that unless one believes that he is the chosen one sent by God, one will not be saved (Jn 8.24). Saving faith thus implies correct propositional faith concerning Jesus' identity.

1.1.2.2 Context Indicates Propositional Faith

But pisteuein hoti is just the tip of the iceberg concerning the NT witness to propositional faith. Even when pisteuein is used absolutely or with a word in the dative case or with prepositional phrases, context reveals that propositional faith is often implicated, along with any personal faith involved. This fact is already evident in several of the passages cited above. For example, Paul's affirmation in Rom 10.10a abbreviates the previous expression of propositional faith in v. 9, and the proof text cited in v. 11 is meant to capture the propositional faith expressed. Jesus' question to Martha pisteueis touto? in Jn 11.26b clearly refers to his propositional claim in 11.25–26a, and Martha responds with her expression of propositional faith. The belief in Jesus in vv. 25b, 26a doubtless also implies the propositional truth affirmed by Martha. In Jn 14.11b Jesus' use of

pisteuete either absolutely or with the dative moi, depending on which reading of the text one follows, abbreviates pisteute moi hoti in v. 11a, which conjoins the hoti clause of v. 10 with the indirect object moi, nicely illustrating how believing someone implicates believing what that person says. Similarly, Jesus' question to the disciples Arti pisteuete? in Jn 16.31b refers back to the disciples' confession of propositional faith in v. 30b. It would be extraordinary if those mentioned in Jn 17.20b, who would believe in Jesus through the disciples' proclamation, did not share the propositional belief of the world mentioned in v. 21. In the purpose statement of John's Gospel in 20.31, even if the believing mentioned in v. 31c has to do with personal faith, it certainly implies the propositional faith mentioned in v. 31b. The victory that overcomes the world in I Jn 5.4, namely, our faith (hē pistis hēmōn), is precisely the propositional faith expressed in vv. 1, 5 that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

1.1.2.3 Linguistic Objects and Propositional Faith

Context, then, can make it clear that uses of pisteuein or pistis without the word hoti may involve or at least imply propositional faith. Indeed, that context need not include a hoti clause at all. When faith expressions are used to express belief in linguistic objects, such as a message or the gospel or the Word of God, it is obviously the propositional content that is being believed, rather than the linguistic object itself that is being trusted (which would amount to idolatry). Abundant examples of such propositional faith present themselves throughout the NT.23

For example, in I Cor 15.11 Paul says with respect to his fellow apostles, "so we preach and so you believed [episteusate]." What did the apostles preach and the Corinthians believe? Paul tells us in vv. 1–5:

Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are

saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed [episteusate] in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received,

that [hoti] Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures,

that [kai hoti] he was buried,

that [kai hoti] he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures,

and that [kai hoti] he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

This kerymatic summary of the gospel provides the propositional content of what the Corinthians believed. So when Paul proceeds to say, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith [hē pistis hēmōn] is in vain… . If Christ has not been raised, your faith [hē pistis hēmōn] is futile and you are still in your sins” (vv. 14, 17), the Corinthians’ faith comprises propositional faith.

Paul’s treatment of Abraham’s faith, one of the most famous passages on faith in the NT, similarly comprises Abraham’s propositional faith, for Abraham did not simply trust God but believed God’s promise:

The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world, did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith [pisteōs]. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith [hē pistis] is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

That is why it depends on faith [pisteōs], in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants – not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith [tō ek pisteōs] of Abraham, for he is the father of us all, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations” – in the presence of the God in whom he believed [episteusen], who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In

hope he believed [episteusen] against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ He did not weaken in faith [tē pistei] when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust [apistia] made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith [tē pistei] as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was ‘reckoned to him as righteousness’ (Rom 4.13–22).

Commentators have frequently remarked on how optimistically Paul treats Abraham’s faith in God’s promise, for in the Genesis account, Abraham is hardly strong and unwavering. But the point remains that however deep Abraham’s personal faith in God, here his propositional faith in what God had promised him is treated as a vital implicate of saving faith.

Similarly, in the Thessalonian correspondence, we find propositional objects of faith:

We also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers [en humin tois pisteuousin] (I Thess 2.13).

For since we believe that [pisteuomen hoti] Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep (I Thess 4.14).

when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all who have believed [en pasin tois pisteusasin], because our testimony to you was believed [episteuthē] (II Thess 1.10).

Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false [pisteusai tō pseudei], so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth [mē pisteusante tē alētheia]

but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth [pistei alētheias] (II Thess 2.11–12).

Here we find not only the explicit propositional faith that Jesus died and rose again, but also implicit propositional faith with respect to the word of God, the apostolic testimony, falsehood, and truth. Indeed, salvation is said to come through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

The most famous NT passage on faith is the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. What is striking about this passage is that the faith extolled here is or implies propositional faith. This fact is already evident in the author's characterization of faith in v. 1: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Leave aside the controverted question of the meaning of hypostasis (assurance) and elenchos (conviction).24 The important point for our purposes is that the objects of faith here are not persons, but things (pragmatōn), namely, things not present to the senses, such as things future and things past. They are accordingly things hoped for (elpizomenōn) and/or things not seen (ou blepomenōn). So what is at issue here, as the chapter discloses, is not just faith in God, but faith in such propositional objects as God's promises concerning the future and his word concerning the past.

Despite the predominant orientation of the chapter toward the future, the first example of faith listed by the author concerns a past event which was unobservable by any human being: the creation of the world. "By faith [pistei] we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Heb 1.3). This faith is exceptional in this chapter in that it was not exemplified by "the men of old" (v. 2) concerning some future event, but by the author and his contemporaries concerning a past event. Knowledge of this event is possible by means of God's

word, the same word through which he created the observable realm (Gen 1). The faith involved here is implicitly propositional, for one understands that God created the world by believing his word concerning creation.

There then follow numerous examples of faith on the part of OT figures. Some of these, such as Abel's faith and Enoch's faith, are prima facie difficult to classify by the categories of v. 1, for neither some future event nor some past reality seems at issue. But following on the heels of these two examples comes the author's famous declaration of the necessity of propositional faith: "For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (v. 6b). Salvation requires that one believe that God, someone who is unseen (ton aoraton) (v. 27), exists and that he rewards those who seek him,25 which Abel and Enoch did. Next, Noah was "warned by God concerning events as yet unseen" and so by faith heeded God's warning and constructed the ark (v. 7). Abraham had been given a promise concerning his inheritance of the land and so obeyed by faith and "went out, not knowing where he was to go" (vv. 8–10). Repeatedly, he (and Sarah) demonstrated their faith in God's promises concerning the future (vv. 11–19), as did Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph after them (vv. 20–22). Moses acted in faith because "he looked to the reward… and endured as seeing him who is invisible" (vv. 26–27). Some of those listed in this chapter accepted martyrdom so that "they might gain an even better resurrection" (v. 35). "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised" (v. 39), since that comes ultimately only though Christ (Heb 12.2).

It goes without saying that all of these heroes of the faith had personal faith in God; but it is equally evident that they also had propositional faith that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Moreover, they believed God's promises and warnings to them, that is to say, they had propositional faith.

In the Gospels we have numerous examples where linguistic entities are said to be the objects of faith; accordingly, these are examples of

implicit propositional faith. Here is a sampling:

So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him [pisteusomen ep’ auton]. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, “I am the Son of God”’ (Mt 27.41–43).

Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel [pisteuete en tō euangeliō]’ (Mk 1.14–15).

“If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe [ou mē pisteusēte]” (Lk 22.67).

“O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe [to pisteuein epi] all that the prophets have spoken!” … And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Lk 24.25, 27).

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed [episteusan] the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken (Jn 2.22).

And many more believed [episteusan] because of his word. They said to the woman, ‘It is no longer because of your words that we believe [pisteuomen], for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world’ (Jn 4.41–42).

“If you believed [episteuete] Moses, you would believe [episteuete] me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe [pisteuete] his writings, how will you believe [pisteusete] my words?” (Jn 5.46).

“Because I tell the truth, you do not believe [pisteuete] me… . If I tell the truth, why do you not believe [pisteuete] me?” (Jn 8.45–46).

“Do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me [pisteuete moi]; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me [emoi pisteuēte], believe the works [tois ergois pisteuete], that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn 10.36–38).

In such passages as these, the object of faith is variously implied to be the Gospel, the Scriptures, what Moses and the prophets have said or written, Jesus' words, the truth, what Jesus had told them, his works, and so on. When the Samaritans come to faith, what is it that they come to believe? – that Jesus is the Savior of the world. What is it that the crowds will not believe? – that Jesus is the Christ. What is it to which both Jesus' words and works testify? – that he is the Son of God, that the Father is in him and he in the Father. When the Jewish leaders mock Jesus, what is it that they offer to believe about him so as be saved by him? – that he is the King of Israel, the Son of God. Propositional faith is implicit in all such passages.

1.1.2.4 Believing Someone and Propositional Faith

Indeed, even without explicit mention of some linguistic item, the expression "believe Jesus" plausibly implies propositional faith, for the expression naturally means "believe what Jesus says."26 While belief in Jesus might be construed to be personal faith without propositional content, "believe Jesus" thus expresses propositional faith. Consider Jesus' dispute with the chief priests concerning John the Baptist (Mt 21.23–27). When he asks them whether John's baptism was from heaven or from men, "they argued with one another, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him [episteusate autō]?" (v. 25). Clearly, "believing John" means believing his claim to administer a baptism from heaven. Jesus then says, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him

[episteusate autō], but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him [episteusan autō]; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him [pisteusai auto]" (Mt 21.31–32). Again, believing John implies believing what John preached concerning the way of salvation. Jesus is not talking about placing one's personal faith in John the Baptist as the key to the Kingdom but believing John's message.

John the Baptist bore witness, of course, to Jesus. So Jesus says,

You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony which I receive is from man; but I say this that you may be saved… . But the testimony which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has granted me to accomplish, these very works which I am doing, bear me witness that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him [toutō humeis ou pisteuete] whom he has sent (Jn 5.33–38).

John's testimony, Jesus' miraculous works, and the Father's testimony in Scripture are all objects of propositional faith, as we have seen, pointing to Jesus' Messianic identity. Believing the one whom the Father has sent similarly implies propositional faith regarding truths about his person.

1.1.2.5 Unbelief and Propositional Faith

As if this were not enough, propositional faith (or the lack thereof) is implicated negatively by pist- words indicative of non-belief. For example, when the women report to the Twelve their vision of angels at the empty tomb, "these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them [ēpistoun autais]" (Lk 24.11), that is to say, did not believe what the women said. When Jesus appears to the Twelve, "they still disbelieved [apistountōn] for joy" (Lk 24.41),

manifesting, not a lack of personal trust in Jesus, but obviously a lack of propositional faith that he was risen and appearing to them. When the other members of the Twelve tell Thomas that they have seen the Lord, he responds that unless he physically touches the risen Lord, “I will not believe [ou mē pisteusō]” (Jn 20.25), that is, believe what the disciples had told him, that Jesus is risen. When Jesus appears to Thomas, and invites him to touch him, Jesus says, “Do not be faithless [apistos] but believing [pistos]” (Jn 20. 27). Of course, personal faith in the risen Lord is at stake, but so is propositional faith that he is risen from the dead. Standing before Agrippa’s court, Paul demands, “Why is it thought incredible [apiston] by any of you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 28.4), a question which can have reference only to propositional belief. Meeting with Jews in Rome, Paul tried “to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved [ēpistoun]” (Acts 28.24), that is to say, they did not believe what Paul said. These and other references to unbelief clearly concern propositional, not just personal, faith.

1.1.2.6 “The Faith” and Propositional Faith

Finally, it is worth mentioning two additional, if more controversial, indications that propositional faith is implied by pistis. The first has to do with the use of “the faith” (hē pistis) to refer apparently to the Christian religion, including its doctrinal content. For example, in Acts we read that “The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith [tē pistei]” (Acts 6.7). After preaching the Gospel in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps, “strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith [tē pistei]” (Acts 14.22). While “the faith” might refer to the Christian community, Acts has a strong emphasis on the apostles’ teaching (2.42; 4.2; 5.25, 28, 42; 13.12; 15.1, 35; 17.19;

18.11; 20.20; 21.28; 28.31), so that the propositional content of what they taught plausibly belongs to the faith. Similarly, when Paul says that after his conversion the churches in Judea heard that “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith [tēn pistin] he once tried to destroy” (Gal 1.23), the doctrinal content of Paul’s preaching is surely involved.27

The fact that “the faith” includes doctrinal content becomes still more plausible when we come to the pastorals, where the concern is maintenance of sound teaching and the refutation of doctrinal error propagated by false teachers. Deacons “must hold the mystery of the faith [tēs pisteōs] with a clear conscience” (I Tim 3.9), a phrase which makes no sense with respect to personal trust and is in any case made clear in the sequel:

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen by angels,
preached among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory (I Tim 3.16).

This early credal formula summarizes some of the propositional content of the faith. By contrast, “In later times some will depart from the faith [tēs pisteōs] by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons… . If you put these instructions before the brethren, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith [tēs pisteōs] and of the good doctrine which you have followed” (I Tim 4.1, 6).

1.1.2.7 “Believers” and Propositional Faith

The second possible indication of propositional faith is the sharp dichotomy drawn throughout the NT between believers (pistoi, hoi pisteuontes) and unbelievers (apistoi) (e.g., I Cor 14.22–24). While pistoi might be plausibly construed to mean “the faithful” (those who are trustworthy), the use of hoi pisteuontes (the believing) as a synonym rules out that meaning. The difference here is between persons who pisteuousin and those who do not. But is propositional along with personal faith comprised here? The strong emphasis on sound doctrine that we have already seen implies that part of what it means to be a believer is to have the right beliefs. So Paul advises, “Take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom 16.17). Our goal is to “attain to the unity of the faith [tēs pisteōs] and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph 4.13–14). Like Timothy, Titus is admonished to “teach what befits sound doctrine” (Tit 2.1). Alerting against deceivers, II Jn 9–10 warns sternly, “Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting.” Such admonitions, along with all we have seen in this section, suggest that believers are distinguished from unbelievers at least in part by the propositional content of their beliefs.

In sum, when we ask about the nature of faith, we are asking after the nature of saving faith, as described in Scripture. The essence of saving faith lies in that relationship of trust and commitment that is personal faith in God. But saving faith as described in the NT implies as a concomitant propositional faith in such truths as God’s

existence, Christ's being the Son of God, his resurrection from the dead, his Lordship, and so on. Without such propositional faith one cannot be saved but remains in his sins.

1.2 Does Faith Imply Belief?

With these scriptural data in hand, let us turn to philosophical reflection on the nature of faith. Our concern is not with an analysis of generic faith but with specifically Christian faith, saving faith. On the basis of scriptural teaching we may proceed on the assumption that any analysis which limits faith to personal faith, for example, faith in Christ, is inadequate to Christian faith, for Christian faith implies, as we have seen, propositional faith in various Christian doctrines. Any view of Christian faith which does not imply propositional faith is thereby excluded as theologically inadequate.28

In addition to other propositional attitudes, there are exactly three doxastic attitudes that a person might take toward a proposition p: belief, disbelief, and non-belief. The customary view has been that propositional faith involves belief in the relevant propositions, that is to say, faith that p implies belief that p, a view that is reflected in the standard English translations of pisteuein as "believe." Remarkably, however, a number of Christian philosophers have recently argued that propositional Christian faith may be and often is non-doxastic faith; that is to say, faith that p, where p is some Christian truth claim like God exists or Jesus rose from the dead, does not always imply belief that p. Accordingly, we need to introduce into our discussion yet another distinction between doxastic faith and non-doxastic faith. Whereas doxastic propositional faith implies belief that p, non-doxastic propositional faith does not.29 Call the view that propositional faith implies belief a doxastic view of faith and the view that propositional faith does not always imply belief a non-doxastic

view of faith. On non-doxastic views of faith saving faith as described in the Bible does not require even the belief that God exists, much less that Jesus is his Son or is risen from the dead. On non-doxastic views of faith, despite saving faith's implying propositional faith, one can be agnostic about Christian propositional claims and yet still meet the conditions of saving faith.

1.2.1 Constituents of Propositional Faith

To understand how this can be so, it will be helpful to consider the elements that make up propositional faith. Although Daniel Howard-Snyder offered initially a fairly representative analysis of generic propositional faith,30 he came as a result of his study of faith in the Gospel of Mark to enunciate a more biblically oriented analysis of propositional faith:

For you to have faith that p, for some proposition p, is (a) for you to have a positive cognitive attitude towards p, (b) for you to have a positive conative orientation towards the truth of p, (c) for you to be disposed to live in light of that attitude and orientation, and (d) for you to be resilient in the face of challenges to living in that way.31

How does such an analysis fare as an account of Christian faith when assessed by Scripture?

The first element (a), a positive cognitive attitude towards p, is the most controversial element of the analysis. We shall therefore return to it after a brief word on the other putative elements of faith.

The second element (b) is a positive conative orientation towards p. Howard-Snyder's earlier analysis of generic faith distinguished having "a positive evaluation of p" from having "a positive conative orientation towards p." On the one hand, having a positive evaluation of p requires that one be for the truth of p. "To be for the truth of a proposition minimally requires considering its truth to be good or desirable."32 To illustrate: while we believe that terrorism will occur

frequently in the twenty-first century, we do not have faith that terrorism will occur frequently in the twenty-first century, for we do not look on the truth of the relevant proposition favorably. On the other hand, conation is a psychological term indicative of desire or volition. So having a positive conative orientation towards p requires desiring or wanting p to be true. Howard-Snyder's present analysis lumps these two elements together, so that (b) might better be put, he says, as requiring that you have a positive conative-evaluative orientation towards p's truth.

A positive conative-evaluative orientation towards p's being the case, widely recognized in the literature as a constituent of faith, is typical of scriptural faith.33 Such an orientation is especially evident in the faith involved in Jesus' healing miracles. People will sometimes go to quite extraordinary lengths in pursuit of healing (Mk 2.1–12; 5.25–34), and on occasion Jesus will ask them "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mk 10.51). Jesus heals them according to their faith (Mk 5.34; 10.52; Mt 8.13; 9. 28–29; Lk 17.19). As he says to the Canaanite woman, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire" (Mt 15.21–28). It hardly needs to be said that in view of the great good of salvation, the beliefs conducive to salvation that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead are viewed by Christians favorably and that they want them to be true.

This second element of faith underlines the point made earlier, that one cannot assume uncritically that pisteuein means to have faith rather than to believe, for one may believe without having faith. The locus classicus for the distinction is Jas 2.19: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe [pisteuousin]—and shudder." Since the demons lack a favorable attitude toward God's existence, it would be inept to translate this passage "even the demons have faith—and shudder." The demons, unlike James' interlocutors, do not have faith without works; they do not even have faith! As Luke Johnson comments, "pistis is reduced to mere belief. The patristic commentators picked up on exactly this point: James is referring to 'simple assent,' which is not the fullness of faith as response to God in action (Oecumenius, Theophylact)."34

The third element (c) requires that in order to have faith one be disposed to live in light of the afore-described positive conative-evaluative orientation. “The idea is that it is not enough that one simply has the requisite cognitive and conative-evaluative attitudes; they must motivate one’s behavior if one has faith.”35 This certainly seems to be a scriptural feature of saving faith. As James so famously says, “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jas 2.14–17). James was not atypical in this conviction (Eph 2.8–10; I Jn 3.6–10; 5.4–5). Paul, whose writings on justification by faith lie at the heart of the NT, would doubtless have agreed (I Cor 6.9–11; II Cor 13.5).

The fourth element (d) is resilience in the face of challenges to living in the way required by (c). This condition expands on Howard-Snyder’s earlier condition of resilience in the face of counterevidence to p. The present version recognizes a variety of non-evidential challenges to living in light of one’s faith, such as fatigue, emotional dryness, depression, and contrary desires. Howard-Snyder recognizes that faith is not immune to such challenges, that one’s cognitive stance might grow weaker, for example, from belief to weak belief, from weak belief to belief that p is only slightly more probable than not, from belief that p is only slightly more probable than not to assuming that p. Nevertheless, one still acts as one did before; one is not disheartened or deterred or discouraged into inaction. In particular, even though one’s cognitive stance is properly responsive to new counter-evidence, still one satisfies “faith’s demand for some measure of resilience and tenacity in the face of counter-evidence.”36

It seems to me that resilience is not at all an inherent element of biblical faith. The Scriptures candidly record instances of persons whose faith has failed, such as Judas Iscariot, Hymenaeus and Alexander, who “have made shipwreck of their faith” (I Tim 1.20),

Hymenaeus and Philetus, who “have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already” and “are upsetting the faith of some” (II Tim 2.18), and Demas, who, “in love with this present world, has deserted me” (II Tim 4.10). Hebrews, along with its roll call of persons resilient in their faith, contains multiple graphic warnings against the danger of apostasy, “lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving [apistias] heart, leading you to fall away from the living God” (Heb 3.12; cf. 6.1–8; 10.26–39). These warnings were addressed to persons who had genuine faith (Heb 3.1; 10.39). Jesus recognized that many who hear the word of God “receive it with joy” but later fall away while others prove “unfruitful” (Mk 4.16–19). Paul sent an emissary to the church he had founded in Thessalonica “to find out about your faith [pistin], for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain” (I Thess 3.5). Paul was acutely conscious of those in the churches who were “weak in faith,” whom inconsiderate behavior might “destroy,” resulting in “the ruin of one for whom Christ died” (Rom 14.15–19). The reasons for the loss of faith may not be intellectual, but as the case of apostates like Hymenaeus and Philetus illustrates, propositional faith, not just personal faith, may be lost. So while the Scriptures abound in examples of resilient faith, it is plain that faith is not always resilient, even to the weak degree Howard-Snyder imagines.

1.2.2 Acceptance Rather Than Belief

Let us return now to (a) the positive cognitive attitude towards p. This notion is difficult to parse.37 As an attitude, it is presumably a mental state, something like believing. So it is not like taking a stand, which would be an action, not an attitude. As a cognitive rather than conative attitude, it has to do with thought rather than with desire and/or volition. The positivity of this state is not to be confused with the favorable evaluation of or desire for p that plays a role in (b). Rather it seems to have to do with being oriented towards affirming p rather than denying p. If we take believing p and disbelieving p to be

the paradigm cases of positive and negative cognitive attitudes, then a positive attitude would seem to be leaning in the direction of belief, while a negative attitude would be leaning in the direction of disbelief. Howard-Snyder thus says that one can have a positive cognitive attitude towards the proposition that one is dying of cancer, even though one does not have a positive conative-evaluative orientation towards it. Howard-Snyder thinks that if one has a positive cognitive attitude towards p, one will in some way "take a stand" in favor of p's truth that is at least partly grounded in one's positive estimation of p's truth, such as a tendency to use p as a premise in practical and theoretical reasoning when appropriate. Since, as we have seen,38 it would be paradoxical to say, "I believe that p, but p is not true," it is easy to see how belief could satisfy the conditions for being a positive cognitive attitude.

Building on the seminal work of William Alston, Howard-Snyder maintains that the positive cognitive attitude towards p required by faith may not be belief. Appealing to the distinction between belief and acceptance, Alston had contended that accepting that p while not believing that p is sufficient for having faith that p. This important distinction was rooted in Jonathan Cohen's differentiation between belief and acceptance. According to Cohen the crucial factor differentiating belief from acceptance is that believing that p involves a "disposition, when one is attending to issues raised, or items referred to, by the proposition that p, normally to feel it true that p and false that not-p," whereas such is not the case with accepting that p.39 Accepting that p "is to have or adopt a policy of deeming, positing, or postulating that p – i.e., of including that proposition or rule among one's premises for deciding what to do or think in a particular context, whether or not one feels it to be true that p."40 Alston formulates the crucial condition distinguishing belief from acceptance as:

2. If S believes that p, then if S considers whether it is the case that p, S will tend to feel it to be the case that p, with one or another

~~degree of confidence.~~

Alston follows Cohen in speaking of feeling, rather than thinking, in order to stress the experiential immediacy of the belief that p: “it is something one experiences rather than something that one thinks out … a matter of one’s being struck by (a sense of) how things are rather than deciding how things are.”41 Since one can have beliefs without possessing the concept of truth, Alston substitutes the expression “to be the case that” for Cohen’s “to be true that.” Alston’s formulation of (2) allows for various degrees of belief, from “complete certainty at the top all the way down to a mere inclination to suppose that p.”42 A handy measure of degrees of belief, he says, is “the different degrees of assurance that p is the case.”43

Condition (2) is not met if S merely accepts that p. Alston agrees with Cohen’s characterization of acceptance. “To accept a proposition is to be prepared to make use of it in reasoning and in guiding one's behavior.”44 Accepting that p is like believing that p with the exception of condition (2) below:

If S believes that p, then if someone asks S whether p, S will have a tendency to respond in the affirmative.

If S believes that p, then if S considers whether it is the case that p, S will tend to feel it to be the case that p, with one or another degree of confidence.

If S believes that p, then S will tend to believe propositions that he or she takes to follow from p.

If S believes that p, then S will tend to use p as a premise in theoretical and practical reasoning where this is appropriate.

If S believes that p, then if S learns that not-p, S will tend to be surprised.

If S believes that p, then S will tend to act in ways that would be appropriate if it were the case that p, given S's goals, aversions, and

other beliefs.

In all items of this list but (2), one may substitute “accepts” for “believes.” So the crucial factor differentiating belief from acceptance is whether or not, upon consideration, one tends to feel it to be the case that p.

For Cohen, one may both believe that p and accept that p just so long as one has the disposition to feel it to be true that p. Alston by contrast wants to pry apart acceptance and believing, maintaining that one who believes that p has no reason to also accept that p. Alston differs from Cohen in taking acceptance to be a voluntary mental act at a particular time, rather than an involuntary state in which one finds oneself. If one finds oneself believing that p, there is no reason to undertake the further voluntary act of accepting that p. Nevertheless, Alston acquiesces in Cohen’s use of “acceptance” to refer to either the mental act or the long-lasting dispositional state in order to be able to apply his analysis to Christian faith.

On the basis of this differentiation Alston argues that the positive cognitive stance involved in Christian propositional faith can be acceptance rather than belief. Unfortunately, Alston focuses on “the contrast between one who feels sure that p and one who, lacking that, accepts that p,” thereby creating a false dichotomy that neglects Alston’s own account of belief, which may be no more than a mere inclination to suppose that p.45 Alston thinks that faith that p differs from belief that p in two respects: (i) only faith that p involves a favorable attitude toward its being the case that p and (ii) only faith that p strongly suggests a weak epistemic position with respect to p.46 As we have seen, Howard-Snyder follows Alston with respect to (i) but not with respect to (ii). He thinks that faith may involve a strong epistemic position with respect to p, even if it is not the optimal epistemic position.47 Biblically speaking, that seems clearly the case, as Jesus’ words to doubting Thomas illustrate: “Have you believed [pepisteukas] because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe [pisteusantees]” (Jn 20.29).

Thomas' cognitive stance toward the proposition that Jesus is risen is identical to the cognitive stance of those who are not eyewitnesses, even though his epistemic position is very strong, indeed. In any event, by focusing on cases of belief where one feels sure that p, Alston overlooks cases in which one's belief is weak. In cases in which one does not have sure, firm belief that p, we cannot presume that one merely accepts that p. While belief that p does not strongly suggest a weak epistemic position with respect to p, we must not neglect cases in which it does involve such a position, lest we infer that all such cases are instances of acceptance rather than belief.

It will be helpful to have before us an illustration of acceptance as opposed to belief at work in an academic discipline.48 A paradigm case of mere acceptance may be found in pure mathematics. For example, the majority of set theorists accept the axioms of Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory with the Axiom of Choice (ZFC) as the standard set theory. But do they believe the axioms of ZFC? If asked, for example, whether an infinite set exists, most set theorists would immediately respond in the affirmative. But when pressed by a mathematical Platonist whether they really believe that such a metaphysically extravagant object truly exists, many, if not most, would demur. Most practicing mathematicians would probably not consider themselves to have made such metaphysical commitments by means of their assertions. So it is common to distinguish between accepting a mathematical statement and believing a mathematical statement. Philosopher of mathematics Penelope Maddy, for example, distinguishes between what she calls "believing the axioms" and "defending the axioms."49 Although such an apologetic concern seems at first blush to assume that the axioms are true and that it is the truth of the axioms that is to be defended, what Maddy is in fact talking about is defending the use of the axioms, regardless of their truth. Indeed, her aim is to "shift attention away from… elusive matters of truth and existence."50 In Maddy's view what justifies the use of set-theoretical axioms is fruitfulness: axioms are properly adopted which are rich in mathematical consequences, or what

Maddy calls “mathematical depth.”51 Thus, accepting the axioms of set theory does not imply belief in the axioms of set theory.

Such a distinction does not imply any disingenuousness on the part of the mathematician; indeed, he may never have even thought about his ontological commitments. This sincere acceptance of set theoretical axioms leads Platonist philosophers John Burgess and Gideon Rosen to complain that “To assent verbally to a claim without conscious, silent reservations, to rely on it in both theoretical and practical contexts, just is to believe that it is true.”52 They thereby testify to the sincere acceptance of the axioms on the part of most mathematicians. But the anti-realist may plausibly challenge the Platonist to prove that the majority of mathematicians, in giving verbal assent to and relying on mathematical existence statements, really believe that there are mathematical objects such as the Platonist asserts there are. Burgess and Rosen do acknowledge indirect evidence in favor of the view that practitioners have less than belief in mathematical objects, namely, the lightheartedness with which novel mathematical entities are introduced, the indifference when it comes to questions of identifying mathematical objects such as the number 2 with other objects such as {{Ø}} or {0, 1}, and the varying reactions of mathematicians when pressed by philosophers about the ontological commitments of their theorems. Pace Burgess and Rosen, these do seem to supply strong grounds for suspecting that statements of mathematical existence are often not understood by mathematicians as on a par with a statement that the Eiffel Tower exists. The overriding point is that a sincere acceptance of the axioms can be meaningfully distinguished from believing the axioms.

In assessing the relevance of acceptance for Christian faith, Alston addresses two questions: (1) Do many sincere, devout, committed Christians accept rather than believe central Christian doctrines? and (2) Does Christianity require belief rather than acceptance?

In response to (1) Alston registers his “distinct impression” that a significant proportion of sincere, committed, devout, contemporary Christians accept but do not believe central Christian doctrines.53

Unfortunately, Alston's discussion is predicated upon his exclusive focus on firm, sure belief as representative of propositional Christian belief.54 Indeed, it must be said that Alston's portrayal of the Christian believer is a caricature. Some Christians, he says, have no more doubts about central Christian truth claims "than they do about their physical surroundings and the existence of their family and friends."55 "But," he protests, "not all sincere, active, committed, devout Christians are like this, especially in these secular, scientistic, intellectually unsettled times."56

Many committed Christians do not find themselves with such an assurance. A sense of the obvious truth of these articles of faith does not well up within them when they consider the matter. They are troubled by doubts; they ask themselves or others what reasons there are to believe that all this really happened. They take it as a live possibility that all or some central Christian doctrines are false. How, then, can they be sincere, committed Christians?57

Alston acknowledges that one might answer that such Christians do, in fact, "believe these doctrines but with less than full, undoubting confidence."58 He later admits that "one can be in a condition that can be called belief even if it is a lesser degree of certainty or firmness than the strong belief on which I have been concentrating."59 Nonetheless, Alston prefers to say that while such uncertain Christians do not believe these doctrines, nevertheless "they may accept them."60 Alston muses that such a Christian "will undoubtedly receive less comfort and consolation from her faith than the unquestioning believer to whom the whole thing seems certain"61 – thereby perpetuating the false dichotomy upon which his apologia for acceptance is based. Alston's proffered examples of acceptance rather than belief among contemporary Christians are similarly based on playing off highly confident belief, "free of doubt" and supported by "rationally decisive evidence," over against belief or faith which is less certain.62

There is another reason Alston takes acceptance rather than belief to characterize much of contemporary Christianity that does not have to do with the certainty of belief, and that is his conviction that acceptance is voluntary, whereas belief is not. This conviction plays a pivotal role in Alston's analysis of Christian faith. Even in the case of highly uncertain belief, he thinks that one cannot choose to believe various Christian doctrines; rather, as we have seen, such belief must "well up" involuntarily within oneself. So, Alston says, to accept Christian doctrines "is to perform a voluntary act of committing oneself to them, to resolve to use them as a basis for one's thought, attitude, and behavior," whereas "to believe them, even if not with the fullest confidence, is to find oneself with that positive attitude toward them… . That conviction, of whatever degree of strength, spontaneously wells up in one when one considers the matter."63

Alston's claim here strikes me as very disputable. If Christian belief does lie within one's control, then what passes as acceptance of Christian doctrines may in fact be a choice to believe those doctrines to one degree or another. But Alston boldly suggests to the contrary that the reason why acceptance "has so completely escaped notice in the mountain of literature on faith" is that "belief" has been inflated in its meaning to encompass acceptance.64 He even thinks that "Philosophers who discuss the question of whether belief can be voluntary regularly take certain thinkers to give a positive answer to this question, where the passages cited in support of this clearly have to do with something in the area of acceptance, rather than with belief."65 According to Alston, that is because these thinkers, such as Aquinas and Descartes, take belief to be a mental act. Since Alston does not think that belief is a mental act, he interprets these thinkers to be really talking about acceptance rather than belief. Alston just assumes that coming to mentally assent to a Christian doctrine cannot be understood as coming to believe that doctrine.66 Alston's hermeneutic thus begs the question against Christian voluntarists.

All this is somewhat beside the point, however. For, as Alston recognizes, the normative question still remains: Does Christianity require belief rather than acceptance? Even if many doubt-ridden Christians merely accept rather than believe central Christian doctrines, is such faith defective? In order to answer that question, Alston devotes a paragraph to the scriptural teaching on faith. He asserts that many passages that are taken to involve propositional belief are better interpreted in terms of either propositional acceptance or non-propositional faith. For example, in Heb 11.6 pisteuō is better translated as “have faith” than “believe.” But then “Propositional ‘faith’ can involve either belief or acceptance.”67 This inference is much too quick. Even if we agree that given its context Heb 11.6 should be translated “have faith,” that goes no distance at all to proving that in the author’s mind propositional faith did not involve belief, that mere acceptance would suffice. Alston has, in fact, said nothing to justify the claim that in Hebrews propositional faith can involve either belief or acceptance. The only other Bible passage cited by Alston is from the longer ending of Mark: “he who does not believe [apistēsas] will be condemned” (Mk 16.16), which Alston would translate “does not have faith.” This passage shows that in the early church faith was regarded as essential to salvation, but it is unclear that propositional faith is at issue and, if so, that mere acceptance suffices for saving propositional faith. Obviously, such an anemic exegetical treatment as Alston offers of the scriptural data on faith affords no conclusions.

1.2.3 Assumption Rather Than Belief

In contrast to Alston, Howard-Snyder thinks that the positive cognitive attitude or stance involved in propositional faith is sometimes neither belief nor acceptance. For “each is at odds with being in doubt; if one believes or accepts something, one will have tendencies that one will lack if one is in doubt about it, for example, a tendency to assert it when asked whether it is so. Therefore, since faith need not be at odds with being in doubt, something else can

stand in for the positive cognitive stance faith requires."68 This argument depends upon the meaning of Howard-Snyder's technical expression "being in doubt." To be in doubt about p is "neither to believe nor disbelieve p as a result of one's grounds for p seeming to be roughly on a par with one's grounds for not-p."69 Being in doubt is thus a complex state of affairs which involves, first of all, neither believing nor disbelieving p. But such a condition is not sufficient for being in doubt, since one might never have even thought of p. So one's epistemic stance regarding p must be the result of one's seeming to have equipollent grounds for p and not-p. One finds oneself in a sort of evidential equilibrium with respect to p and not-p. Again, such a condition alone is not sufficient for being in doubt. For one might, despite one's evidential equilibrium, believe p without grounds, depending on what one means by "grounds." If one means propositional evidence, then having equipollent grounds for p and not-p is consistent with believing p in a properly basic way, in which case one may be fully warranted in believing p and even certain that p.70 If one construes "grounds" so widely as to comprise non-propositional evidence, then one might believe p without grounds, either by simply finding oneself involuntarily believing p or by freely choosing to believe p or by believing p on the basis of a practical argument.71 So to be in doubt requires that both conditions be fulfilled: one suspends judgement about p due to equipollent grounds for p and not-p.

On such an account it is analytic and therefore trivially true that being in doubt about p is incompatible with having the belief that p. But not only does such an account leave it open to one's accepting p while in doubt about p;72 it also becomes a live question whether a Christian ever really is in doubt about the central truths of the Christian faith. Certainly, he may have doubts about them, even severe doubts, where "to have doubts about whether p – note the 's' – is for one to have what appear to one to be grounds to believe not-p and, as a result, for one to be at least somewhat inclined to disbelieve p."73 But the Christian for whom p is properly basic is not "in doubt" about p, where p is some central Christian doctrine, for it

seems to him that p is the case as opposed to not-p and he does have good grounds for p as opposed to not-p. Indeed, he may know that p, being warranted in believing p. On such an account, Christian faith is at odds with being in doubt after all. Obviously, we must say more about the epistemic status of Christian belief in the sequel; but for now it is sufficient to note the impact of such a religious epistemology (so-called Reformed Epistemology) upon Howard-Snyder's argument against belief or acceptance as the positive cognitive stance required by faith.

In any case, Howard-Snyder claims that even when we find ourselves in doubt, as defined above, there is still something that we can act on: an assumption. We can assume that Christianity is true and then act on that assumption, even though we neither believe it nor accept it. Of Alston's six conditions of believing that p, Howard-Snyder would say that only (3), (4), and (6) are, with appropriate substitutions, characteristic of assuming that p. If one assumes that p, then one will lack a tendency to affirm that p when asked whether p, lack a tendency to feel it to be the case that p upon considering whether p, and lack a tendency to be surprised upon learning that not-p.

Again, it will be helpful to have an illustration of assumption at work in an academic discipline. The paradigmatic use of assumption occurs in high-level physical theorizing. Theoretical physicists will assume various models in the attempt to account for the physical phenomena and seek to carry out experimental testing to determine the empirical fit of such models. Not only are such models predicated upon certain theoretical assumptions internal to the model but the physical interpretation of the model may be based on certain assumptions. Special and general relativity furnish prime examples of both. Albert Einstein's special theory is predicated upon two unprovable postulates (Voraussetzungen), which are simply assumed to be true:

Postulate 1: “For every reference system in which the laws of mechanics are valid, the laws of electrodynamics and optics are also valid.” (“Principle of Relativity”)

Postulate 2: “Light is always propagated in empty space with a definite velocity c which is independent of the state of motion of the emitting body.” (“Principle of the Constancy of the Velocity of Light”)[74]

Not only are these twin postulates assumed to be true, but Einstein assumed that the theory as a whole described the behavior of three-dimensional bodies enduring through one-dimensional time. In 1908, the German mathematician Hermann Minkowski challenged that assumption by proposing a radically different physical interpretation of special relativity. Minkowski proposed that space and time be united in a four-dimensional mathematical space, three of whose dimensions represent physical space and the fourth time.[75] In this formulation, relativity theory could be exhibited with great clarity, so that Einstein immediately abandoned the space and time formulation of his original 1905 paper in favor of Minkowski’s spacetime formulation. Minkowski's spacetime approach to relativity theory, especially with the development of Einstein’s general theory of relativity, came to be the dominant mode of presentation and discussion of relativity. In the general theory, which is actually a gravitational theory, gravity is assumed to be, not a force, but rather a warping of spacetime. But according to Arthur Fine, few working, knowledgeable scientists give credence to realist existence claims for entities like the four-dimensional manifold and associated tensor fields; rather “most who actually use it think of the theory as a powerful instrument, rather than as expressing a ‘big truth’.”[76] Either a space and time or a spacetime formulation can be given to relativity theory, depending on one’s assumptions. In theoretical physics, the use of assumptions in formulating models and in physically interpreting those models is standard practice. The

assumptions need not be regarded as true in order to yield empirical predictions and spawn technological advances.

The role of assumptions in scientific theorizing also discloses how circumscribed conditions (3) and (4) must be in order to hold for assuming that p. For what follows from a theoretical assumption will be assumed or used as a premise only within the confines of the relevant theory. For example, one will not tend to use the assumption of the continuity of spacetime, foundational to general relativity theory, when doing quantum mechanics, unless one is searching for a unified theory. This fact goes to underline how thin a notion of propositional faith results if one takes the positive cognitive attitude required by faith to be mere assumption.

Howard-Snyder denies that his notion of beliefless assuming is like scientific hypothesizing because (i) unlike beliefless assuming, hypothesizing is just for the sake of action guidance; (ii) unlike beliefless assuming, one does not hypothesize something because it seems to one the most likely of the credible options but rather because one wonders what follows from it; and (iii) unlike beliefless assuming, one does not hypothesize a worldview and structure one's entire life around it.77 Apart from the accuracy of this characterization of scientific hypothesizing,78 the more important point is that the first two alleged differences have to do with the motivation for assuming, not with the nature of assuming itself, and the third serves only to highlight the different roles played by assuming in religion and science, a difference of context not of essence.

Howard-Snyder's characterization of the positive cognitive attitude he takes to be a constituent of faith makes it questionable whether assumption is suitable for the requisite positive cognitive attitude. Unlike the case of belief that p, there is no paradox in affirming, "p is not true, but I assume that p." With appropriate substitutions, acting as if p seems to meet conditions (3), (4), and (6) just as well as assuming that p. But Howard-Snyder is anxious to deny that assuming that p can be just the disposition to act as if p. His

justification is that while acting as if p is compatible with disbelieving p, assuming that p is not.79 In this claim he seems clearly mistaken.80 As philosopher of science Imre Lakatos emphasized, one may reasonably pursue a theoretical research program without taking the relevant theory to be true so long as the research program is progressive, that is, fruitful in suggesting new avenues of research and yielding new scientific results.81 Indeed, the hard core of the theory is apt to be regarded as false. Empirically adequate theoretical models would often be so complex as to be intractable, so that “toy” models involving radical simplifications are assumed instead, despite their falsity. Frederick Suppe comments:

When a sophisticated theory is undergoing active development, it is commonplace for scientists working on it to suppose that the present version of the theory is defective in various respects, which is to say that it is literally false, at best being only an approximation to the truth or a promising candidate; … in the process of developing a comprehensive theory, at various stages one’s theory may not purport to be a ‘true’ theory; rather the theory is introduced as an ‘idealization,’ an ‘abstraction,’ a ‘simplification,’ a ‘model,’ or even as a ‘fiction’; or one has a theory in a particular stage of development where one does not know which of these statuses the theory has… .82

String theory, which, in contrast to the standard model of particle physics, takes the fundamental constituents of the world to be, not particles, but vibrating, one-dimensional strings of energy, would be a good example of model which is widely regarded as false even by those pursuing a research program based on it. So would the many models of quantum mechanics, all of which are mathematically consistent and empirically equivalent, though most of which are likely false because they are physically incompatible with one another. But we need not turn to such exotic examples in order to illustrate the assumption of false theories. The twin pillars of contemporary physics, relativity theory and quantum theory, are known to be

incompatible with each other and therefore at least one of them, and probably both of them, false. Scientists continue to pursue fruitful research programs on the assumption of theories they consider likely to be false.

Moreover, on Howard-Snyder's own account,83 one who assumes that p, where p is thought to be more probable than each of its competitors but less probable than 0.5, assumes p while disbelieving p, since not-p, the conjunction of all p's competitors, will have a credence of at least 0.5 and therefore on Howard-Snyder's account will be believed, however weakly, rather than p, since one does not have equal epistemic grounds for p and so is not in doubt about p. Therefore, Howard-Snyder seems mistaken in trying to differentiate assuming that p from acting as if p on the grounds that it is impossible both to assume p and disbelieve p. If, as Howard-Snyder claims, faith that p is incompatible with disbelief that p,84 then his account of the positive cognitive stance involved in faith is in real trouble and requires fundamental revision.

Now acting as if p is not itself a cognitive attitude but a practical stance toward p.85 What cognitive attitude is associated with acting as if p? It is pretending that p, which seems just as positive a cognitive attitude towards p as assuming that p. In the work of the influential pretense theorist Kendall Walton pretending that p is analyzed as imagining that p is true.86 Belieflessly assuming that p seems to be no more than imagining that p. If the cognitive stance involved in faith is no more positive than imagining that p, then Howard-Snyder has allowed making-believe that p to stand in for believing that p. But Malcolm and Scott rightly protest that "pretend faith is no more faith than pretending to be in love with someone is to be in love with someone."87 Clearly, biblical faith is not making-believe that God exists or that Jesus rose from the dead. Doxastic views of faith, by contrast, have "a very neat solution to this challenge: pretend faith is not faith because it does not involve religious belief."88

Howard-Snyder goes to some lengths to show that those who pretend to have faith fail to meet the conditions for faith that he has laid out.89 But that is not the question. The question, rather, is whether assumption meets the conditions for a positive cognitive attitude and hence for faith. Since assumption is compatible with pretending that p and so acting as if p, assumption does not seem to be a suitable candidate for faith.

Be that as it may, the crucial question will once more be whether Howard-Snyder's account of faith is adequate to what Scripture requires for saving Christian faith.90 Like Alston, Howard-Snyder advocates translating Heb 11.6 as "have faith that" God exists, a rendering adopted by a few Bible translations.91 But he goes beyond Alston in suggesting that for the author of Hebrews faith does not entail belief. For obviously, he says, one can draw near to God even if one lacks belief that God exists; indeed, one can draw near to God even if one has a mere hope that he exists. So from Heb 11.6 taken in isolation we should take away two things: (i) someone can draw near to God only if he has faith that God exists and (ii) someone can have faith that God exists even if he has a mere hope that God exists.

Howard-Snyder's approach to the project of Bible translation strikes me as terribly misguided and potentially misleading. One cannot determine the correct translation of an expression on the basis of whether the view expressed seems right to us. That is to risk imposing one's own meaning on the text. One must rather read the expression in context in an effort to determine how the author himself understood and used the expression. Indeed, in this case, it is precisely the context of Heb 11 that provides the best reason for translating pisteuein in v. 6 as "have faith." Hence, the first take-away is unobjectionable. But to infer (ii) is to impose one's own theory of faith upon the author. The stubborn fact is that an author may say things with which we disagree, and the translator is not at liberty to massage the translation to remove the disagreement. Given the way in which the author of Hebrews uses the expression "draw near" [proserchomai; cf. eggizō in 7.19] to describe coming into a saving

relationship with God (4.16; 7.25; 10.1, 22; 11.6), it is not at all improbable that he thought that in order to come into such a relationship with God one needs to believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him. Indeed, drawing near to God “in full assurance of faith [plērophoria pisteōs]” (10.22) and to the throne of grace “with confidence [meta parrēsias]” (4.16) hardly sounds like proceeding on the basis of what Howard-Snyder calls the “beliefless assumption” that God exists. In any case, the importance of Heb 11.6 is that it shows the necessity of propositional faith for saving faith; but it leaves it open whether propositional faith implies belief. To that extent we may agree with Howard-Snyder that this verse taken in isolation is not a proof-text that faith entails belief.

In another place, in one of the few studies of scriptural teaching on faith by a Christian philosopher, Howard-Snyder has attempted to show that “while it may well appear that, according to the NT authors, one can have faith only if one believes the relevant propositions, appearances are deceiving.”92 Rather, he contends, what the NT authors say about faith is compatible with non-doxastic views of faith; indeed, a non-doxastic view of faith may fit what they say even better than a doxastic view. Once again, Howard-Snyder suggests replacing all belief words in our English NT with faith words. Then in order to defend a doxastic view of faith, he says, “we’ll have to argue, not merely assume, that each use of the faith lexicon entails belief; that conclusion won’t be foisted on us by a failure in modern English.”93

This claim is misconceived. First, given the wide semantic range of pistis and its cognates, not every instance should be translated by a belief word. Moreover, a doxastic view of faith is a view specifically of propositional faith only. Most NT passages about faith are about personal faith, though many of these, as we have seen, imply propositional faith. And even when a passage does express propositional faith, it may not be clear whether belief is implied. Furthermore, in order to justify a doxastic view of faith, it suffices to show that some, even one, passage of Scripture makes it likely that propositional Christian faith implies belief. It is up to the proponent of

a non-doxastic view of Christian faith to show that some passage of Scripture shows that propositional faith need not imply belief.

Second, the suggestion that the use of belief words in English translations is somehow a failure of English is precisely the opposite of the truth. Rather it is a deficiency of the Greek language that it lacked the terminology to distinguish between faith and belief, not to mention trust, faithfulness, reliability, and so on, all of which were subsumed under pist- vocabulary. In general, it is the language that has, not lacks, a variety of terms that has the better capacity to draw distinctions. To provide a homely illustration, French-speaking philosophers have enormous difficulty grasping the distinction, common among Anglophone philosophers, between tenseless and tensed theories of time. That is because in French the same word is used for both time and tense: temps. As a result, an expression like “tensed time,” being literally untranslatable, is bewildering and requires explication rather than translation. Similarly, ancient Greek used pistis for both faith and belief, and sometimes multiple meanings are in play in a single sentence. English translators may therefore find themselves hard-pressed as to the best translation of a word.

To keep his investigation tractable, Howard-Snyder quite sensibly focuses on the use of pist- vocabulary in the Gospel of Mark alone. Since Mark does not say what pistis is, Howard-Snyder chooses to focus on Mark’s dramatis personae with a view toward determining which of their features are most closely associated with pistis. He suggests that we can discern which features are most salient for faith by looking at which features of a person’s faith are commended by Jesus. If Jesus fastens on a particular feature, then that feature is not only closely associated with faith but is a good candidate for partly constituting faith in the world of the story.

It seems to me that while such a methodology is interesting and worth pursuing, it neglects other aspects of Mark’s Gospel, such as the teaching of Jesus regarding faith, and so leads at best to tentative conclusions. Moreover, the inference that a constantly

commended feature of faith is a constituent of faith, rather than a property of commendable faith or even an implication of faith, is surely too strong.94 Jesus' commendation of a particular feature of a person's faith may actually be intended to highlight certain cases of exemplary faith that stand out from run of the mill cases. Indeed, why commend it if all faith has this feature?

Be that as it may, Howard-Snyder argues for a two-fold hypothesis: (i) resilience is a stellar candidate for a constitutive feature of faith, and (ii) propositional belief is not a stellar candidate. Now immediately misgivings arise. No one thinks that propositional faith, much less belief, is the central concern in the Gospels. Rather it is personal faith, which is certainly commendable when resilient, that occupies center stage. While personal faith implies, as we have seen, propositional faith, propositional faith is not the focus. Even if in "the world of the story" personal faith rather than propositional faith plays a starring role, one may not infer that propositional faith is not implied by personal faith.

We shall not survey Howard-Snyder's colorful and often imaginative exposition of all the relevant Markan pericopes but shall report our impression of the whole. First, it seems clear that Howard-Snyder confuses resilience with perseverance or strength. Resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks, to "bounce back" to one's former condition. Perseverance or strength is the capacity to endure and overcome obstacles, whether setbacks occur or not. Many of the Markan pericopes, e.g., the healing of the paralytic (2.1–12), of the woman with a hemorrhage (5.24b–34), and of Bartimaeus (10.46–52), are about strong, persevering faith rather than resilient faith. These persons never suffered a lapse of faith from which they recovered. In order to characterize Jairus' faith (5.21–24, 35–43) as resilient, Howard-Snyder has to "imagine that his faith remained despite the testimony of his senses,"95 when in fact Mark says nothing at all about the character of Jairus' faith; his focus is on Jesus' power and how Jesus (not Jairus!) faces down the obstacles. And, of course, Jesus' own faith exhibits strength and perseverance, not resilience, since his faith in God never falters or fails, even in the

Garden of Gethsemane. About the only person in Mark's Gospel who exhibits resilient faith is Peter, who denies Jesus and whose restoration is foreshadowed (16.7), though his faith is not explicitly mentioned. Ironically, Teresa Morgan's list of the meanings of words in the pistis lexicon, cited by Howard-Snyder,96 does not include resilience and has as their core meaning trust.

Now certainly in the Gospels Jesus consistently commends strong, persevering trust in God. Should we then think of strength or perseverance rather than resilience as a stellar candidate for a constituent of faith? Clearly not, for although Jesus commends people for their great faith, he also recognizes that the faith of many is small. One of the most interesting cognates of pistis is oligopistos, those of little faith (e.g., Mt 6.30; 8.26; 16.8; Lk 12.28). Jesus taught that faith might be as tiny as a mustard seed; nevertheless great things can be accomplished through even such small faith (Mt 17.20; Lk 17.6). Doubt can overcome faith (Mk 11.23; Mt 14.31; 21.21). So clearly faith is not always strong and persevering but comes in a wide range of degrees.

Second, Howard-Snyder sometimes seems to miss the propositional truths implied in Mark's stories. For example, he misses the irony and significance of the blind Bartimaeus' addressing Jesus with the Messianic title "Son of David," thereby perceiving correctly Jesus' identity, which is then publicly disclosed at his triumphal entry (Mk 11.10). The healing of the paralytic is meant to disclose Jesus' identity as the Son of Man, with the authority to forgive sins (Mk 2.10). The faith of the woman healed of her hemorrhage reveals her estimation of Jesus' person, "For she said, 'If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well'" (Mk 5.28). The raising of Jairus' daughter reveals Jesus' power even over death. We must not overlook the important propositional truths embodied in these stories of faith.

Third, we have seen that even if the Gospels do not often use explicit statements of propositional faith like pisteuein hoti, they do use expressions that imply propositional faith, such as Jesus' telling

people to believe in the Gospel (Mk 1.15). Without presuming to maintain that propositional faith is a constituent of personal faith, we can say that propositional faith is implied by personal faith, whereas there are no grounds for thinking resilience to be either a constituent or implication of personal faith.

What, then, of Howard-Snyder's second hypothesis, that propositional belief is not a stellar candidate for a constitutive feature of faith? This second hypothesis is really somewhat beside the point because a doxastic view of faith does not require that propositional faith be a constituent of saving faith, rather than an entailment or implication of saving faith. Howard-Snyder considers two arguments in support of propositional belief's being such a candidate in Mark:

Such a role is implied by the contrast in 11.23 between pisteuō and diakrinō. But all Howard-Snyder claims to prove, despite his tortured retranslation of Mk 11.23, is that "Jesus does not suggest that faith cannot coexist with doubt"97—a conclusion clearly compatible with propositional belief's being a constituent of faith, so long as it comes in degrees. When in Mk 9.23–24 Jesus exclaims to the father of the demon-possessed boy, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes," he is challenging the man to believe that Jesus can heal his son, and the father responds, "I believe; help my unbelief!", thereby showing the compatibility of belief and doubts. Since Mk 11.23 contains the construction pisteuein oti, propositional faith cannot be avoided in this verse. Moreover, it is very plausible that in this promise pisteuein implies belief, since doubt is the opposite of belief, and since belief, like doubt, occurs "in his heart," which suggests sincere belief, nothing like beliefless assuming. The promise is to one who has a propositional belief that is not attended by doubt.

Mark closely associates faith with propositional belief in the pistis pericopes. Howard-Snyder admits that "people believed that Jesus was able to heal" them, which is, of course, propositional belief, even if they did not believe that he would heal them. That settles the

issue. Moreover, Jesus healed the paralytic so that people might "know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2.10), which entails that they might believe it. The thought of the woman healed of her hemorrhage, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well," expresses her propositional belief. Howard-Snyder cannot believe in light of the obstacles she faced that she really believed such a thing. But did Mark think she did? Moreover, as we have seen, persons such as Bartimaeus believed that Jesus was the Son of David, while Jewish leaders refused to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, the King of Israel. Propositional beliefs are implicated throughout Mark, not to speak of the rest of the Gospels.

1.2.4 Assessment of Non-Doxastic Views

We come now at length to some assessment of a non-doxastic view of faith. Is such a view a plausible construal of saving faith, Christian faith, scripturally assessed? I take it as proved that Christian faith implies propositional faith in various Christian doctrines. The question, then, is whether propositional Christian faith involves belief. Although this may seem obvious to many of us, non-doxastic views of faith are typically so carefully hedged that they become difficult to refute. If, for example, it can be shown that some instance of faith in Mark plausibly implies belief, the proponent of a non-doxastic view will remind us that in many cases faith does imply belief; indeed, it may be that ideally or optimally the positive cognitive stance involved in faith is, in fact, belief.98 Nonetheless, it is claimed, saving faith need not involve belief. The question then is whether belief in the relevant truths is a necessary condition of saving faith.

1.2.4.1 Reformed Epistemology and Doxastic Faith

The first thing to note is that non-doxastic views of faith are incompatible with standard formulations of widely influential, so-called Reformed Epistemology, to be discussed in Volume IIb. According to that epistemology, God has so designed our cognitive faculties as to produce belief in central Christian truths, so that beliefs thus produced are properly basic with respect to both rationality and warrant. The Christian therefore both believes and knows the truths witnessed to him by the Holy Spirit. Every regenerate Christian enjoys the inner witness of God's Spirit. Indeed, only by willfully resisting the inner instigation of the Holy Spirit can one fail to believe the truths vouchsafed to one by the Holy Spirit. Even the noetic effects of sin are overcome by the work of the Spirit in the sinner's heart and mind, so that unbelief is utterly unjustified. The unbeliever, whether non-Christian or nominally Christian, does not possess saving faith.

Christian faith, so understood, faces, of course, multifarious defeaters in our secular age, and if faith is to be rational, those defeaters will have to be in turn defeated. How that might be accomplished will be discussed in Volume IIb. Christian faith is thus compatible with having doubts, even severe doubts, about Christian truth claims. This fact is especially evident on externalist construals of the instigation of the Holy Spirit, but even on internalist construals, the witness of the Holy Spirit may not be indubitable or overpowering in the believer's experience. A believer struggling with doubts may have only weak belief in central Christian truth claims, a condition which is notoriously difficult to distinguish experientially from acceptance. On Alston's account only a tendency to feel it to be the case that p distinguishes belief from acceptance, a condition so nebulous and, I suspect, susceptible to self-deception and mood swings as to be useless in distinguishing belief from acceptance, a fact obscured by Alston's consistent focus on unrealistically sure belief.

Neither can the voluntariness of one's cognitive stance toward Christian truth claims serve to mark off acceptance from belief. Reformed Epistemology is consistent with belief's being either

voluntary or involuntary. It may be that I choose to believe the truths testified to me by the Holy Spirit. Alston's pointing to examples of beliefs which are not within my control, such as the Blue Jays' winning the pennant, does nothing to prove that no belief lies within my control. It may well be that when I find myself in a state of epistemic equilibrium, I can freely choose to believe that God exists; indeed, I suspect that this is a common experience. On the other hand, if the Reformed epistemologist holds that the Holy Spirit produces such beliefs in me involuntarily, still, on the standard accounts, I must first freely acquiesce to the Holy Spirit's working in me in order for that to occur. Thus, Alston's assertion that "If I were to try to do something that will bring it about, right away, that I believe that Salem is the capital of Massachusetts, I wouldn't know what button to push" is a worthless pièce de résistance.99

I shall have to say something by way of assessment of Reformed Epistemology later, but for the present it is sufficient to note that this widely accepted religious epistemology stands opposed to non-doxastic accounts of Christian faith.

1.2.4.2 Mentality of the Ancient World

The second thing that should be said about non-doxastic views of faith is that they import into the literature of the ancient world and into the NT in particular a modern philosophical distinction between belief and acceptance (or assumption) which is alien to the mentality of the ancient world. No attempt was made at that time to distinguish between pisteuein in the sense of "to believe" and in the sense of "to accept (or assume)." The fact that NT commentators never discuss the question whether propositional Christian faith implies belief is abundant testimony to the foreignness of the distinction to ancient mentality.100

Nowhere is this fact more evident than in Teresa Morgan's lengthy examination of the ancient world's mentalité with respect to

pistis/fides. The main distinction she knows is between faith as trust and faith as propositional belief. She is oblivious to the modern distinction between faith as belief and faith as acceptance because such a distinction was not part of the mentality of the ancient world. Thus she says, for example, with respect to John's Gospel:

What is believed or is to be believed in these passages, moreover – that Jesus is of God, that he came from God and was sent by God, that he is in the Father and the Father in him, and that he is identified with God – closely matches what is said of Jesus in other passages where people are invited to trust/believe in him in relational terms. On one level this is not surprising either. It reminds us of what we have seen repeatedly in earlier chapters, that relational trust is always intertwined with propositional beliefs: when anyone – Greek, Roman, Jewish, or Christian – puts their trust in anyone, divine or human, they do so in part because of things they believe about them.101

Summarizing, she writes, "wherever relationships of trust exist, beliefs are also involved… . We can therefore take for granted that belief is involved in some way wherever pistis language occurs in the New Testament."102

But Morgan is speaking as a historian and biblical scholar, not as an analytic philosopher. She confesses, "We typically translate pisteuein 'to believe', but when we do that, we (i.e. classicists and biblical scholars) are not thinking about all the other cognitive attitudes which philosophers identify."103 She thinks that while one cannot rule out on linguistic grounds alone that acceptance, for example, might be the cognitive stance involved in faith, nevertheless, "In Acts and the epistles, where coming to trust in God and Christ is based on the proclamation of the gospel, the very strong presumption must be that preachers and writers wanted people actually to believe, not just e.g. to accept provisionally, that Christ died for their sins and was raised."104 The Gospels offer a different scenario, she thinks, because of the ambiguity of Jesus' person:

people who come to Jesus seem to see him in different ways – as healer, prophet, teacher, exorcist – and want different things from him. No-one in the gospels, including the disciples, understands who Jesus is in all his aspects, but apparently they do not need to, to follow him or to be told they are healed or saved. So even if those people believe something about Jesus, they can believe something very partial – hold a belief which is quite inadequate to who Jesus is – and that's OK. So apparently saving pistis is compatible, at least, with very incomplete belief.105

While interesting, this caveat is somewhat off point, for the question is not the cognitive content of saving faith – what one must believe in order to be healed/saved – but rather whether propositional faith implied certain beliefs. As Morgan recognizes, clearly it did: however partial, however inadequate to Jesus' person, however incomplete, nonetheless the people who came to Jesus did believe something about Jesus, for example, that he was the Son of David, that he had power to heal, that he was God's Anointed, and so on. Therefore, in the Gospels the propositional faith implicated by personal faith in Jesus did involve a cognitive stance of belief, even if the content of that faith was not as rich as the faith articulated in Acts and the epistles.

Given how alien the modern distinction between faith as belief and faith as acceptance is to antiquity, it becomes difficult to imagine how the proponent of a non-doxastic view of Christian faith could successfully make a case that the propositional faith described in the NT need not involve belief but only acceptance or assumption. It is very dubious that any non-doxastic view of faith was on the mind of any NT writer.

1.2.4.3 Insufficiency of Non-Doxastic Faith

Third, a cognitive stance less than belief is too weak to give a plausible account of scriptural teaching on saving faith. Nowhere in the Bible does God call us to assume or accept his existence. On the contrary, it affirms that all persons know that God exists. In Rom 1.18–20 Paul writes:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Since such persons know that God exists, it follows that they believe that God exists, even if they, lacking the favorable attitude and connation requisite for faith, do not have faith that God exists, much less faith in God. Whether their belief in God is properly basic, formed in the context of their observation of nature, or a natural inference from the created order around them is a question that may be left for the sequel. What is important for now is that according to Paul all men know that God exists, even if they wickedly suppress that knowledge.106 Moreover, God's existence is so plain to them and so clearly perceived by them that they are without excuse for their failure to acknowledge God (v. 28), so that the wrath of God rests upon them. Christians who do have the favorable attitude and connation requisite for faith have similar knowledge and similar belief (Heb 11.6).

Moreover, faith in Christ also clearly involves propositional belief. Look again at the contrast between pagans and Christians drawn by Paul in II Thess 2.11–13. The pagans "believe what is false," and so are condemned along with all who "did not believe the truth," whereas God chose the Christians to be saved through "belief in the truth." Since the belief ascribed to the pagans is propositional false belief, the Christians' pistis alētheias can be nothing less than true

belief. Recall as well Paul's statement in Rom 10.9–10, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved." Confession that does not express belief is hypocrisy,107 which is anathema to God, and pisteuein with one's heart is most plausibly interpreted as sincere belief, not mere acceptance or assumption. The Abrahamic faith extolled by Paul as the model of saving faith involved the same cognitive stance toward God's promise that he should become the father of many nations as it did toward God's reality (Rom 4.17–18), which can be nothing less than belief.

The champions of the faith listed in Heb 11 certainly believed God's promises to them, as evident from their perseverance and even martyrdom. Such courage in the face of horrible suffering could hardly indicate in the author's mind mere acceptance or assumption. Of course, the proponent of non-doxastic faith may say that these persons exhibited exceptional faith, which involved belief. But Heb 11.6 makes such a construal implausible, since it lays down a necessary condition for drawing near to God in a saving, personal relationship and so pleasing God, which typifies the people described in the chapter. They show us what it is to believe that God exists and rewards those who seek him.

The many passages cited above from the Gospels where linguistic entities are the objects of faith108 are clear instances of propositional belief, especially those passages where people refuse to believe something, for such a skeptical attitude is clearly a doxastic attitude. The contrasting positive attitude is accordingly likewise a doxastic attitude. The Gospel of John is especially emphatic in its teaching that faith in Christ implies various propositional beliefs about Christ. That belief, not merely acceptance or assumption, is at issue is evident in Jn 17.20–21: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that

thou hast sent me." Notice here that in its second use pisteuein is ascribed to the world, not to the followers of Jesus. Since "the world" in John designates those who do not have saving faith in Christ, their pistis that God has sent Jesus cannot be anything more than mere belief. But then the saving faith exemplified by Jesus' followers spoken of first cannot be anything less than belief. So when Jesus says, "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he" (Jn 8.24), he is laying down a propositional belief as a necessary condition of salvation.

The Gospel of John is also noteworthy for the connection of pisteuein and ginōskein (to know). Morgan observes that they are twice paired in such a way that it is hard to differentiate their meaning:109

Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6.68–69).

"Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me" (Jn 17.7–8).

Moreover, ginōskein and pisteuein appear in close proximity in Jn 3.10–12; 8.27–32; 8.43–46; 14.7–10. Morgan also observes that around a dozen of the 34 passages in John where ginōskein has to do with theologically significant knowledge concern propositional knowledge, for example, "Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority'" (Jn 7.16–17).110 Such use of ginōskein with respect to propositional truths is decisive, since knowledge entails belief. If anyone wills to do God's will, then he shall not merely

accept or assume Jesus' teaching without belief, but he will know and, hence, believe that Jesus' teaching is from God.

Finally, we should be remiss if we did not discuss one of the most famous NT texts on faith, superseded only by Rom 1.16–17 and Heb 11, namely:

You believe that [pisteueis hoti] God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe [pisteuousin] – and shudder (Jas 2.19).

James' statement is one of the most intriguing passages concerning the cognitive stance required by saving faith. As pisteuein hoti shows, it is propositional faith that is in view here. The proposition at stake recalls the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Dt 6:4), stating what would have been a fundamental and hallowed truth for James' Jewish Christian readers (cf. I Cor 8.4–6; Gal 3.20; Eph 4.6; I Tim 2.5) that served to mark them off from virtually all pagans.

Pisteuein when used with respect to the demons' cognitive stance can only be translated "believe," for they lack the favorable attitude and positive conative orientation toward Jewish monotheism characteristic of faith, as is evident from their response: they shudder. Thus, their cognitive stance toward the proposition that God is one is that they believe it.111 Moreover, the demons would hardly be terrified as a result of belieflessly adopting or assuming a proposition, not to mention the fact that if anyone knows that God exists it is the demons (Mk 1.24). So we have firm grounds for understanding pisteuein with respect to demons to mean nothing more and nothing less than "believe."

But now consider pisteuein with respect to James' correspondents, whom he addresses as "brethren" who "hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.2; 2.1). They share the same cognitive stance toward the same proposition as the demons. So although they no doubt have a favorable attitude and positive conative orientation

toward what they believe, their positive cognitive stance is the same as the demons': they believe that God is one, and James commends them (however sarcastically) for it. Moreover, the context of Jas 2.14–26 shows that it is no less than saving faith that is at issue here. James' discussion of the faith that justifies is a counterpoint to Paul's, James insisting that mere belief is not enough for saving faith. Jas 2.19 is thus not just an offhand, isolated remark but a theologically significant comparison concerning the nature of saving faith. It tells us that saving faith involves nothing less than belief. Non-doxastic views of Christian faith are therefore ruled out.

1.2.4.4 Criticisms of Belief+

We have come to see that saving faith involves belief plus some additional features, what in contemporary discussion has come to be called belief+ (belief plus).112 On the basis of our examination of biblical saving faith, we may readily respond to the typical criticisms of faith as belief+.113 Consider, for example, Howard-Snyder's four objections to the traditional view of faith.114

In contemporary English, being in doubt about something need not be at odds with having faith that it is so. Such ordinary language arguments are nugatory when it comes to scriptural teaching. Biblical saving faith requires various propositional beliefs and so, while compatible with severe doubts, is incompatible with "being in doubt" as defined by Howard-Snyder. Note as well that saving faith is compatible with fideism or believing on practical grounds.

One can have faith that p but lack a tendency to be surprised upon learning it is not so; but one cannot believe p while lacking a tendency to be surprised upon learning it is not so. Since saving faith implies belief, the Christian will have such a tendency, if the argument is sound. But the argument is far too subjective to be

probative. If a person's belief is weak, he may not have such a tendency.

One can have faith that p even if one does not believe p but rather merely believes p is likely, or p is twice as likely as not, and so on. Saving faith requires that one believe p to some degree. If, plausibly, belief that p requires minimally that one is more confident that p than that not-p, then believing that p is more probable than not may suffice for weak belief that p.

Acceptance is not belief, and it can stand in for the positive cognitive stance faith requires. Acceptance is, indeed, usefully distinguished from belief, and it is too weak a cognitive stance to stand in for the positive cognitive stance required by saving faith.

In an article co-authored with Daniel McKaughan,115 Howard-Snyder adds the following three objections to belief+:

The faith exhibited in the Gospel of Mark does not require belief. We have seen that this claim is both unwarranted and in any case inconclusive. It is inconclusive, even if true, since an adequate biblical theology must take account of the whole of Scripture. It is unwarranted, not only for the methodological reasons we noted earlier, but also for its flawed interpretation of faith in Mark. For example, Howard-Snyder and McKaughan's claim that to attribute to the woman healed of her hemorrhage the belief that Jesus would heal her is to "uncharitably impute to her an irrational degree of credulity" stands in express contradiction to the Markan text: "For she said, 'If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well'" (Mk 5.28). Moreover, Jesus in Mark does not demand belief that he will heal but that he is able to heal, as the story of the father of the demon-possessed boy shows (Mk 9.23–24).

Some exemplars of faith, such as Mother Teresa, lack the required belief or anything like it. Taking human exemplars rather than the teaching of Scripture as our guide to the nature of saving faith is a

case of misplaced authority and in any case begs the question in favor of non-doxastic views of faith. Only God knows whether Mother Teresa deep in her heart retained her belief in Christ. Perhaps she was deeply conflicted, struggling with both belief and unbelief. Howard-Snyder and McKaughan are willing to allow that “as her doubt grew and crowded out her belief, perhaps another belief replaced it; perhaps she believed that the BCS [basic Christian story] is more likely than not.”116 In that case I should say that she may well have retained weak belief in the BCS. This raises, moreover, the question as to what she meant by describing herself as lacking “belief.” If by “belief’ she understood the sort of serene confidence which Alston takes to characterize belief and which she once enjoyed, then her coming to lack “belief” fails to exemplify non-doxastic faith.

Belief+ implausibly allows no “thinner” content to faith in a person than that he will come through for you. Again, this sort of appeal to ordinary language and personal intuition cannot override the teaching of Scripture. Besides, no reason has been given to think that belief+ does not allow all sorts of contents, such as that someone is able to come through or probably will come through.

1.3 Concluding Remarks

In summary, as Christian theologians we are interested primarily in saving faith, specifically Christian faith, not secular faith. While saving faith is fundamentally personal faith in God or Christ with all that that involves, personal faith implies propositional faith with respect to various Christian truth claims. Propositional faith involves a positive cognitive stance of belief toward the relevant proposition, along with a favorable attitude and positive conative orientation

toward the state of affairs described. Not only do the typical objections to doxastic faith fail, but we have also seen that non-doxastic views of faith are incompatible with standard formulations of Reformed Epistemology, according to which Christians have beliefs with regard to central Christian truths which are properly basic with respect to both rationality and warrant, and more importantly, that non-doxastic views of faith fail to do justice to scriptural teaching on saving faith. The attempt to drive a wedge between faith as belief and faith as acceptance (or assumption) is to draw a distinction alien to the NT and results in an analysis of saving faith that is much too weak to account plausibly for the NT data, which imply that we know central Christian truth claims.

All this is of great practical importance for the Church. Howard-Snyder and McKaughan are not content merely to enunciate and defend a philosophical position with respect to the nature of faith but further advocate practical changes with respect to the way in which the Church should handle persons who find themselves on “the trajectory from doubt to getting out,” that is, to abandoning Christianity.117 They offer some heartfelt, pastoral advice to a person on such a trajectory in order to prevent his slide from doubt to abandonment of Christian faith and thus to facilitate his staying in rather than getting out: “despite your doubt, you can act on the assumption that the BCS is true and, on the basis of that assumption, you can continue to follow Jesus, by beliefless faith and not by sight.”118 They even go so far as to advocate Church reform in light of their view:

If faith is compatible with belief-canceling doubt, then, unless the Church reforms its view of faith, it will continue to contribute needlessly to a problem about full participation and belonging in the Church that is increasingly being addressed in the West by walking out the door.

For this reason, we submit that the Church today would do well to take with utmost seriousness the idea of beliefless Christian faith of

the sort we have plumped for in these pages.119

While motivated by a laudable desire to be inclusive of those in doubt, such advice is, I fear, not merely mistaken but dangerous. It is striking that Howard-Snyder and McKaughan offer no advice for getting out of doubt but merely legitimate staying in it. They say nothing to the Christian in doubt about how to reverse the trajectory and move from doubt to believing faith. Even more telling is the fact that they have nothing to say to a person who finds himself on a quite different trajectory: the trajectory from unbelief to faith. On non-doxastic views of faith, it is of no great urgency or importance that the unbeliever come to belief in Christ. It is enough for him to act on his belieflessly assuming the basic Christian story. Non-doxastic views of faith may lull unbelievers, whether outside or inside the church, into a false sense of security concerning their spiritual condition, when they are, in fact, unregenerate persons who are merely nominally Christian. Persons who have first come to accept Christian truth claims without yet believing them should be encouraged along the pathway that leads them eventually to believing, saving faith.

At the same time we can make room in the Church for Christians struggling with doubts by emphasizing that belief comes in degrees measured by the believer’s confidence that what is believed is the case. Persons claiming to no longer believe but merely to accept Christian truth claims may in fact have very weak belief. When struggling with doubts, we can always cry out with the man who besought Jesus, “I believe! Help thou my unbelief!” Meanwhile, we encourage the Christian struggling with doubt to examine himself to ensure that there is no unconfessed sin in his life that would quench or grieve the Holy Spirit and so mute his witness, to engage in personal spiritual disciplines like Bible reading and prayer, corporate worship and service, to seek daily the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and to study the apologetic defenses, both positive and negative, of the truths of the Christian faith.

2 The Rationality of Faith

We come now to our second question: what rational justification might be given for faith, that is, for Christian faith? One of the most rapidly developing areas of contemporary Christian philosophy has been religious epistemology, especially the exploration of the rationality and warrant of Christian truth claims.

2.1 Practical Justification

In dealing with the rationality of Christian faith, philosophers have helpfully distinguished between practical justification and epistemic justification.120 The latter is concerned with the provision of truth-directed reasons, that is, reasons aimed at establishing the truth of the proposition in question, that are sufficient for a rational person to believe the relevant proposition, whereas the former is concerned with the provision of non-truth-directed reasons that are sufficient for a rational person to believe the relevant proposition.121 Whereas proponents of non-doxastic views of faith seek to meet the challenge of explaining how faith can be rationally justified by propounding a more easily justifiable, etiolated faith without belief, proponents of doxastic views of faith may meet that challenge by allowing that faith may be practically justified even in cases in which it is not epistemically justified. Many Christian philosophers have argued that even if one lacks grounds of whatever sort for thinking Christian doctrinal claims to be true, nevertheless one might be justified on pragmatic grounds in affirming such claims.

Proponents of pragmatic arguments aim to show that we are sometimes within our rights in holding beliefs for which we lack epistemic justification. A common illustration is the belief on the part of someone suffering from stage-4 cancer that he will come though all right. Having such a belief may actually be conducive to his survival in view of the health benefits of such an optimistic attitude.

Therefore, even though his belief that he will survive his cancer may not be epistemically justified and in that sense be irrational, still he is practically justified in believing such a thing. Practical rationality and epistemic rationality can thus come apart.122

A pragmatic argument for religious belief seeks to provide grounds for holding a particular belief because of the benefits to be had from holding that belief. Jeff Jordan has helpfully distinguished two types of pragmatic arguments: truth-dependent and truth-independent arguments.123 A truth-dependent argument recommends holding a belief because of the great benefits to be gained from holding that belief if it should turn out to be true. A truth-independent argument recommends holding a belief because of the great benefits to be gained from holding that belief whether or not it turns out to be true.

2.1.1 Truth-Dependent Arguments: Pascal's Wager

The most celebrated truth-dependent, pragmatic argument for Christian belief is Pascal's Wager, the brainchild of the French mathematical genius Blaise Pascal.124 Pascal argued, in effect, that belief in God is pragmatically justified because we have nothing to lose and everything to gain from holding that belief. Although Pascal's Wager can be formulated in a number of ways, one way to understand it is by constructing a pay-off matrix exhibiting the expected utility of one's choices relative to the truth of the belief that God exists:

~~I. God exists~~

~~II. God does not exist~~

~~(i) I believe~~

~~A. Infinite gain minus finite loss~~

~~B. Finite loss~~

~~(ii) I do not believe~~

~~C. Finite gain minus infinite loss~~

~~D. Finite gain~~

Pascal reasons that if I believe that God exists and it turns out that he does, then I have gained heaven at the small sacrifice of foregoing the pleasures of sin for a season. If I believe and it turns out that God does not exist, then I gain nothing and have suffered the finite loss of the pleasures of sin I have foregone. On the other hand, if I do not believe and it turns out that God does, in fact, exist, then I have gained the pleasures of sin for a season at the expense of losing eternal life. If I do not believe and it turns out that there is no God, then I have the finite gain of the pleasures afforded by my libertine lifestyle.

Now according to a principle of decision theory called the Expected Utility Principle, in order to maximize the utility or benefit of my choices, I should multiply each of the mutually exclusive outcomes by the probability of each of the two states' obtaining and add these products together. Make that choice having the highest expected utility. In Pascal's Wager the odds of states (I) and (II) are assumed to be even (the evidence for and against God's existence is of exactly the same weight). So, letting א0 stand for infinity and n for any natural number, we may calculate the utility of choices (i) and (ii) as follows:

$(A \times 0.5) + (B \times 0.5) = (א0 \times 0.5) + (\sim n \times 0.5) = א0$

$(C \times 0.5) + (D \times 0.5) = (\sim א0 \times 0.5) + (n \times 0.5) = \sim א0$

In other words, choice (i) has infinite gain and choice (ii) infinite loss. Thus, it is clear that belief has greater expected utility than unbelief. Therefore, even in the absence of preponderant evidence for theism, we should believe in the existence of God.

Two principal objections have been raised against the Wager argument. First, in standard decision theory infinite utilities cannot be handled. In particular, since division of infinite quantities is prohibited in transfinite arithmetic, it makes no sense to speak of ℵ0 × 0.5. But this problem is easily resolved: simply substitute for ℵ0 any arbitrarily high finite quantity, and it will still swamp the lower quantity n representing our finite loss or gain.

Rather the truly serious objection to Pascal's Wager is the so-called "many gods" objection. A Muslim could set up a similar pay-off matrix for belief in Allah. A Mormon could do the same thing for his god. In other words, state (II) God does not exist is actually an indefinitely complex disjunction of various deities who might exist if the Christian God does not. Thus, the choice is not so simple, for if I believe that the Christian God exists and it turns out that Allah exists instead, then I shall suffer infinite loss in hell for my sin of associating something (Christ) with Allah.

There are two possible responses to this objection. First, in a decision-theoretic context we are justified in ignoring states which have remotely small probability of obtaining. Thus, I need not concern myself with the possibility that, say, Zeus or Odin might exist. Second, we could try to limit the live options to the two at hand or to a tractable number of alternatives. This may have been Pascal's own strategy. The Wager is a fragment of a larger, unfinished Apology for Christian theism cut short by Pascal's untimely death. As we look at other fragments of this work, we find that although Pascal disdained philosophical arguments for God's existence, he embraced enthusiastically Christian evidences, such as the evidence for Christ's resurrection. It may be that he thought that on the basis of such evidence the live options could be narrowed down to Christian theism or naturalism. If the alternatives

can be narrowed down in this way, then Pascal's Wager goes through successfully. Indeed, so long as Christian theism has at least a 50% chance of being true, then the proliferation of non-Christian alternatives does not matter, since Christian theism remains at least as probable as not.125 Since, in my studied judgement, Christian theism is at least as probable as not, I think that Pascal's Wager does provide practical justification for Christian belief.

2.1.2 Truth-Independent Arguments: James' Will to Believe

A good example of a truth-independent, pragmatic argument for theistic belief may be found in William James' classic essay "The Will to Believe."126 Written in response to W. K. Clifford's ringing pronouncement that it is wrong, always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence, James wants to show that we are sometimes pragmatically justified in willing to believe something in the absence of evidence of its truth. In cases in which we have no preponderant evidence for or against a belief, we may resort to pragmatic considerations, James insists, if and only if the belief is for us a genuine option, that is to say, a choice which is living, momentous, and forced. A living choice is one which presents to me a belief to which I can give genuine assent. A choice is momentous if a great deal hangs on it, it presents to me a rare opportunity, and its consequences are irreversible. Finally, a choice is forced if there is no option of remaining indifferent, if to not choose to believe is, in effect, to choose to not believe. James held that religious belief meets these criteria. Moreover, he was convinced that religious belief is beneficial in this life, regardless of its promises for the next. His studies had convinced him that religious believers are more balanced, happier, and more virtuous people than unbelievers. Regardless of religion's truth, then, religious belief is beneficial and, in view of such benefits, pragmatically justified. Michel Rota has done a good job marshalling the contemporary psychological, medical, and sociological evidence in support of the this-worldly benefits of Christian belief, which can make it practically rational for someone to believe who has a credence of at least 50%

for Christian theism and finds Christianity to be considerably more probable than any of its competitors.127

A potential difficulty with the applicability of such pragmatic arguments to religious belief is that practical rationality seems to concern the rationality of action rather than belief. Liz Jackson explains:

Practical rationality, unlike epistemic rationality, is associated with an agent's goals and what is at stake for that agent, and is more commonly applied to actions than to mental states. In this, acts of faith are evaluated for rationality from a practical point of view. It might be rational for me to perform some act of faith because I have a lot to gain if it is true and little to lose if it is false.128

While we are practically justified in choosing a course of action on the basis of expected utility without adequate epistemic justification, we may not be able to believe on the basis of pragmatic reasons.129 We thus recur to the claim that belief is not under our control and therefore not an action. But we have seen reason to question the claim that in a state of epistemic equilibrium such as Pascal and James envision we are not able to will to believe.130 Certainly we may choose to believe and then trust God to produce faith in us. We thereby undertake what John Bishop calls a doxastic venture with respect to Christian theism.131 At the least, we may, as Jackson says, undertake various acts with the hope and prayer that belief may come. Pascal himself recognized that some of his readers might feel incapable of believing and so advised them to engage in the faith practices of a Christian community so that in time faith would come to them.132 In such a case one could choose to accept Christian propositional claims and over time come to believe them and so find saving faith.133

2.2 Epistemic Justification

Some thinkers will insist that while pragmatic arguments show that holding certain beliefs, including religious beliefs, is beneficial and therefore prudent, nevertheless that does not show that holding such beliefs is epistemically permissible, that one has not violated some epistemic duty in believing without adequate evidence. Accordingly, critics of Christian belief have typically defended what has been called the evidentialist objection to Christian belief, which can be formulated as follows:

Christian belief is epistemically justified only if there are cogent arguments in support of Christian belief.

There are no cogent arguments in support of Christian belief.

Therefore, Christian belief is not epistemically justified.

Some Christian philosophers have responded to the evidentialist objection by defending various arguments of natural theology and Christian evidences on behalf of Christian belief in order to rebut (2).134 Proponents of such an evidential case for Christian belief may or may not agree with (1). Some Christian philosophers deny that such arguments are necessary in order for Christian belief to be epistemically justified but hold merely that such arguments as are available are sufficient to epistemically justify Christian belief.135 A person who knows that Christianity is true, for example, on the basis of the witness of the Holy Spirit, may also have a sound apologetic which reinforces or confirms for him the Spirit's witness, but does not serve as the basis of his belief.136 If the arguments of natural theology and Christian evidences are successful, then Christian belief is warranted by such arguments and evidences for the person who grasps them, even if that person would still be warranted in their absence. Such a person is doubly warranted in his Christian belief, in the sense that he enjoys two sources of warrant.

One can envision great benefits of having such a dual warrant of one's Christian belief. Having sound arguments for the existence of a Creator and Designer of the universe or evidence for the historical credibility of the NT records of the life of Jesus in addition to the inner witness of the Spirit could increase one's confidence in the veracity of Christian truth claims. On Plantinga's epistemological model (to be described later), at least, one would then have greater warrant for believing such claims. Having greater warrant could in turn lead an unbeliever to come to faith more readily or inspire a believer to share his faith more boldly. Moreover, the availability of independent warrant for Christian truth claims apart from the Spirit's witness could help predispose an unbeliever to respond to the drawing of the Holy Spirit when he hears the Gospel and could provide the believer with support in times of spiritual dryness or doubt when the Spirit's witness seems eclipsed. One could doubtless think of many other ways in which the possession of such dual warrant for Christian belief would be beneficial.

I have elsewhere distinguished between knowing Christian belief to be true and showing Christian belief to be true.137 Even if the normative and primary way in which we know that Christian belief is true is not via argument, still such arguments may serve the apologetic task of showing Christian belief to be true. The role of the Holy Spirit is then to use our arguments to convince the unbeliever of the truth of Christianity. Consider the example of Jesus and the apostles as portrayed in the NT. In the Gospels Jesus appeals to miracles and to fulfilled prophecy to prove that his claims are true (Lk 24.25–27; Jn 14.11). As for the apostles, in dealing with Jews, they appealed to fulfilled prophecy, Jesus' miracles, and especially Jesus' resurrection. A model apologetic for a Jewish audience is Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In v. 22 he appeals to Jesus' miracles; in vv. 25–31 to fulfilled prophecy; in v. 32 to Christ's resurrection. In dealing with non-Jews, the apostles sought to show the existence of God through his handiwork in nature (Acts 14.17). In Romans 1, Paul says that from nature alone all men can know that God exists (Rom 1.20). Paul also appealed to eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Jesus to show further that Christianity is true (1 Cor 15.3–8). In Acts it is Paul's standard procedure to present arguments for the truth of the Gospel and so defend the faith:

> And Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead… . So he argued in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market place every day with those who chanced to be there… (Acts 17.2–3, 17).
>
> And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God… (Acts 19.8).
>
> And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. And some

were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved (Acts 28.23–4).

It is quite apparent, then, that neither Jesus nor the apostles as portrayed in the NT are reluctant to argue for the truth of what they proclaim. That does not, of course, imply that Christian apologists do not trust the Holy Spirit to bring people to faith. Rather they trust the Holy Spirit to use their arguments to bring people to faith.

So Christian philosophers who reject (2) may nonetheless find great value in Christian apologetics despite their rejection of (1) as well as (2). Since I do not think that such an apologetic case, though available to us, is necessary for the epistemic rationality of Christian belief, we leave it aside for present and turn to an examination of (1) instead.

2.2.1 Plantinga's "Reformed" Epistemology

One of the most significant developments in contemporary religious epistemology, already alluded to, is so-called Reformed Epistemology, spearheaded and developed by Alvin Plantinga, which directly challenges the evidentialist construal of epistemic rationality. Plantinga's epistemology developed gradually over the course of three decades, but he has articulated it fully in a monumental three volume series, Warrant: The Current Debate (1993), Warrant and Proper Function (1993), and Warranted Christian Belief (2000). Here we can limn only the broad outlines of his theory.

Plantinga distinguishes between what he calls de facto and de jure objections to Christian belief. A de facto objection is one aimed at the truth of the Christian faith; it attempts to show that Christian truth claims are false. By contrast a de jure objection attempts to undermine Christian belief even if Christianity is, in fact, true. Plantinga identifies three versions of the de jure objection: that Christian belief is unjustified, that it is irrational, and that it is unwarranted. He takes justification to be a deontological or ethical notion, conformity to one's epistemic duties. Rationality has to do

with possession of properly functioning cognitive faculties, with the sorts of beliefs that a properly functioning human being would have in the relevant circumstances. Warrant is that property which, when had in sufficient amount, distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief. Plantinga's aim is to show that all such de jure objections to Christian belief are unsuccessful, or, in other words, that Christian belief can be shown to be unjustified, irrational, or unwarranted only if it is shown that Christian beliefs are false. There is thus no de jure objection to Christian belief independent of a de facto objection.

Plantinga endeavors to show this by developing a model or theory of warranted Christian belief, that is to say, an account of how it is that we know the truth of various Christian truth claims. On behalf of his model Plantinga claims, not that it is true, but that (i) it is epistemically possible, that is to say, for all we know, it may be true; (ii) if Christianity is true, there are no philosophical objections to the model; and (iii) if Christianity is true, then something like the model is very likely to be true. So Plantinga sets for himself two projects, one public and one Christian: (1) to show that there is no reason to think that Christian belief lacks justification, rationality, or warrant (apart from presupposing the falsehood of Christian belief) and (2) to provide from a Christian perspective an epistemological account of warranted Christian belief.

Consider, then, the de jure objection to religious belief, for instance, to the belief that God exists. According to the evidentialist, even if it is true that God exists, one is unjustified or irrational in believing that God exists unless one has sufficient evidence in support of that belief. For according to the evidentialist, one is rationally justified in believing a proposition to be true only if belief in that proposition is either foundational to knowledge or is established by evidence that is ultimately based on such a foundation. According to this viewpoint, since the belief God exists is not foundational, it would be irrational to believe such a proposition apart from evidence for its truth. But, Plantinga asks, why cannot the belief God exists be itself part of the foundation, so that no evidence is necessary? The evidentialist replies that only beliefs that are properly basic can be part of the

foundation of knowledge. What, then, are the criteria that determine whether or not a belief is properly basic? Traditionally, the evidentialist has asserted that only beliefs in propositions that are self-evident or incorrigible are properly basic.138 For example, the proposition The sum of the squares of the sides of a right triangle is equal to the square of the hypotenuse is self-evidently true. Similarly, the proposition expressed by the sentence “I feel pain” is incorrigibly true, since even if I am only imagining my injury, it is still true that I feel pain. Since the proposition God exists is neither self-evident nor incorrigible, then according to the evidentialist it is not properly basic and therefore requires evidence if it is to be believed. To believe this proposition without evidence is therefore irrational.

Now Plantinga does not deny that self-evident and incorrigible propositions are believed in a properly basic way, but he does challenge the assumption that these are the only propositions which are so believed. He presents two considerations to prove that such a restriction is untenable: (i) If only self-evident and incorrigible propositions are properly basic, then we are all irrational, since we commonly accept numerous beliefs that are not based on evidence and that are neither self-evident nor incorrigible. For example, take the belief that the world was not created five minutes ago with built-in memory traces, food in our stomachs from the breakfasts we never really ate, and other appearances of age. Surely it is rational to believe that the world has existed longer than five minutes, even though there is no way to prove this. The evidentialist’s criteria for proper basicality must be flawed. (ii) In fact, what about the status of those criteria? Is the proposition Only propositions that are self-evident or incorrigible are properly basic itself properly basic? Apparently not, for it is certainly neither self-evident nor incorrigible. Therefore, if we are to believe this proposition, we must have evidence that it is true. But there is no such evidence. The proposition appears to be just an arbitrary definition – and not a very good one at that! Hence, the evidentialist cannot exclude the possibility that belief in God is also a properly basic belief.

And, in fact, Plantinga thinks that belief in God is properly basic, not only with respect to justification but also with respect to rationality and warrant. For Plantinga justification involves either obedience to one's epistemic duties or the possession of a sound noetic structure of beliefs, whereas warrant is that property which converts mere true belief into knowledge when possessed in sufficient degree. Plantinga thinks that the theist is not only within his epistemic rights in believing in God without evidence and that he exhibits no noetic defect in so doing, but that he actually knows apart from evidence that God exists. In order to show that such a view is tenable, Plantinga introduces his epistemological model of religious belief. Quoting John Calvin's teaching that "There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity… . a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is engraved upon men's minds" (Institutes I.iii.1, 3), Plantinga proposes that "there is a kind of faculty or cognitive mechanism, what Calvin calls a sensus divinitatis or sense of divinity, which in a wide variety of circumstances produces in us beliefs about God."139 Plantinga also speaks of the sensus divinitatis as "a disposition or set of dispositions to form theistic beliefs in various circumstances or stimuli that trigger the working of this sense of divinity."140 Just as perceptual beliefs like There is a tree are not based on arguments from more basic beliefs but arise spontaneously in me when I am in the circumstances of a tree's appearing to be there, so the belief God exists arises spontaneously in me when I am in appropriate circumstances, such as moments of guilt, gratitude, or awe at nature's grandeur, as a result of working of the sensus divinitatis. Plantinga emphasizes that God's existence is not inferred from such circumstances – such an argument would be manifestly inadequate; rather the circumstances form the context in which the sensus divinitatis operates to produce a basic belief in God. Thus, belief in God is not arbitrary; it is grounded by the appropriate circumstances and so is properly basic. Hence, if such a model of theistic belief is true, the theist whose belief is produced in the described way violates no epistemic duty in believing and so is justified in believing that God exists.

But does he know that God exists? We often are justified in holding beliefs that turn out to be false (for example, the object I thought was a tree turns out to be a paper-maché simulation). Is our belief that God exists not merely justified, but warranted, and therefore knowledge? That all depends on what warrant is. In the first volume of his warrant trilogy, Plantinga surveys and criticizes the major theories of warrant which are offered by epistemologists today, such as deontologism, reliabilism, coherentism, and so forth. Fundamentally, Plantinga's method of exposing the inadequacy of such theories is to construct thought experiments or scenarios in which all the conditions for warrant stipulated by a theory are met and yet in which it is obvious that the person in question does not have knowledge of the proposition which he believes because his cognitive faculties are malfunctioning in forming the belief. This common failing suggests that rational warrant inherently involves the notion of the proper functioning of one's cognitive faculties. But this raises the troublesome question, what does it mean for one's cognitive faculties to be "functioning properly"? Here Plantinga shocks mainstream epistemology by proposing a peculiarly theistic account of rational warrant and proper functioning, namely, that one's cognitive faculties are functioning properly if and only if they are functioning as God designed them to. He summarizes the conditions for warrant as follows:

This view can be stated to a first approximation as follows: S knows p if (1) the belief that p is produced in S by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly (working as they ought to work, suffering from no dysfunction), (2) the cognitive environment in which p is produced is appropriate for those faculties, (3) the purpose of the module of the epistemic faculties producing the belief in question is to produce true beliefs (alternatively, the module of the design plan governing the production of p is aimed at the production of true beliefs), and (4) the objective probability of a belief's being true, given that it is produced under those conditions, is high.141

Although he adds various subtle qualifications, the basic idea of Plantinga's account is that a belief is warranted for a person just in case his cognitive faculties are, in forming that belief, functioning in an appropriate environment as God designed them to. The more firmly such a person holds the belief in question, the more warrant it has for him, and if he believes it firmly enough, it has sufficient warrant to constitute knowledge. With respect to the belief that God exists, Plantinga holds that God has so constituted us that we naturally form this belief under certain circumstances; since the belief is thus formed by properly functioning, truth-aimed cognitive faculties in an appropriate environment, it is warranted for us, and, insofar as our faculties are not disrupted by the noetic effects of sin, we shall believe this proposition deeply and firmly, so that we can be said, in virtue of the great warrant accruing to this belief for us, to know that God exists.

So, Plantinga maintains, if his model is true, theistic belief is not only justified but warranted. So is theistic belief warranted? That all depends on whether or not God exists. If he does not, then theistic belief is probably not warranted. If he does, then Plantinga thinks that it is. For if God exists, then he has created us in his image, he loves us, and he desires that we know and love him.

And if that is so, the natural thing to think is that he created us in such a way that we would come to hold such true beliefs as that there is such a person as God… . And if that is so, then the natural thing to think is that the cognitive processes that do produce belief in God are aimed by their designer at producing that belief. But then the belief in question will be produced by cognitive faculties functioning properly according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth: it will therefore have warrant.142

The bottom line is that the question of whether belief in God is warranted is at root not epistemological, but metaphysical or theological. The question "can't be settled just by attending to

epistemological considerations; it is at bottom not merely an epistemological dispute, but an ontological or theological dispute."143 It follows that there is no de jure objection to theistic belief independent of the de facto question of whether theism is true.

But if there is no de jure objection to theistic belief, what about specifically Christian beliefs? How can one be rational and warranted in holding to Christian theism? In order to answer this question, Plantinga extends his model to include not just the sensus divinitatis but also the inner witness or instigation of the Holy Spirit.

The extended model postulates that our fall into sin has had disastrous cognitive and affective consequences. The sensus divinitatis has been damaged and deformed, its deliverances muted. Moreover, our affections have been skewed, so that we resist what deliverances of the sensus divinitatis remain, being self-centered rather than God-centered. God in his grace needed to find a way to inform us of the plan of salvation which he has made available, and he has chosen to do so by means of (i) the Scriptures, inspired by him and laying out the great truths of the Gospel, (ii) the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in repairing the cognitive and affective damage of sin, thereby enabling us to grasp and believe the great truths of the Gospel, and (iii) faith, which is the principal work of the Holy Spirit produced in believers' hearts. When a person is informed of the great truths of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit produces in him, if he is willing, assent to these truths. The internal instigation of the Holy Spirit is therefore "a source of belief, a cognitive process that produces in us belief in the main lines of the Christian story."144

In Plantinga's view the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit is the close analogue of a cognitive faculty in that it, too, is a belief-forming "mechanism." As such the beliefs formed by this process meet the conditions for warrant: (i) they are produced by cognitive processes functioning properly, (ii) the environment in which we find ourselves, including the cognitive contamination wrought by sin, is the cognitive environment in which this process was designed to function, (iii) the process is designed to produce true beliefs, and (iv) the beliefs

produced by it, namely, the great truths of the Gospel, are in fact true, so that the process is successfully aimed at producing true beliefs. Therefore, one can be said to know the great truths of the Gospel through the instigation of the Holy Spirit.

Because we know the great truths of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit's work, we have no need of evidence for them. Rather they are properly basic beliefs for us, both with respect to justification and warrant. Plantinga therefore affirms that "according to the model, the central truths of the gospel are self-authenticating,"145 that is to say, "They do not get their evidence or warrant by way of being believed on the evidential basis of other propositions."146

Once again, then, Plantinga concludes that if Christianity is true, then it probably has warrant in a way similar to the way described in the model. For if Christian belief is true, then we have fallen into sin and are in need of salvation.

Furthermore, the typical way of appropriating this restoral is by way of faith, which, of course involves belief… in the great things of the gospel. If so, however, God would intend that we be able to be aware of these truths. And if that is so, the natural thing to think is that the cognitive processes that do indeed produce belief in the central elements of the Christian faith are aimed by their designer at producing that belief.147

The most common objection lodged against Plantinga's model has been that it leads to a radical relativism. Plantinga calls this "the Great Pumpkin objection." For if belief in God or Christianity can be properly basic, then just any belief, it is alleged, such as Linus' belief in the Great Pumpkin, can also be properly basic.

Now with respect to justification, Plantinga agrees that this allegation is, in fact, true. We can imagine someone placed in circumstances in which belief in the Great Pumpkin would be justified for him in a properly basic way. For example, perhaps Linus' parents assured him of the existence of the Great Pumpkin, just as some normally

trustworthy parents assure their children of the reality of Santa Claus. Since beliefs grounded in testimony are on Plantinga's analysis properly basic, it follows that Linus' belief in the Great Pumpkin is in such circumstances properly basic with respect to justification. But this admission is for Plantinga inconsequential. It does not imply that bizarre beliefs like belief in the Great Pumpkin are properly basic for normally situated adults. In order to be properly basic with respect to justification, a belief must be appropriately grounded, and for most people belief in the Great Pumpkin is not. More importantly, belief in the Great Pumpkin is not, in any case, implied by Plantinga's epistemology to be properly basic with respect to warrant. Just because certain beliefs are properly basic in respect to warrant in no way implies that any arbitrarily selected belief is also warranted in this way. In Linus' case the cognitive environment is not appropriate because he is being lied to, and therefore his belief is unwarranted. Thus, even if on Plantinga's theory Linus is within his rational rights in believing in the Great Pumpkin, it does not follow that he knows that the Great Pumpkin exists.

But, it has been objected, if Christian epistemologists can legitimately claim that their beliefs are properly basic, then any community of epistemologists, for example, voodoo epistemologists, can also legitimately claim that their beliefs are properly basic, no matter how bizarre they might be. Plantinga calls this objection the "Son of Great Pumpkin" objection. Again, he freely admits that the allegation is correct with respect to justification. We can easily imagine circumstances under which voodoo epistemologists could legitimately claim that their beliefs in voodoo are justified in a basic way. The important question is whether they could legitimately claim that voodoo beliefs are properly basic with respect to warrant. The answer to that question, says Plantinga, will depend on what we mean by "legitimately." If we mean merely "justifiably," then once again Plantinga freely admits that they could; but he sees no relativistic consequences flowing from this admission. Being justified is just too easy a state to attain to be of much significance. Voodoo

epistemologists under the influence of a native narcotic might well be within their rational rights in thinking that voodoo beliefs are properly basic with respect to warrant. But no relativistic conclusion follows from that. Do we mean by “legitimately,” then, “warrantedly”? If so, then nothing in Plantinga’s model implies that the voodoo epistemologists are warranted in their claim. On the contrary, insofar as voodoo beliefs are incompatible with the deliverances of the innate sensus divinitatis, Plantinga’s model implies that voodoo epistemologists cannot be warranted in claiming that their beliefs are properly basic with respect to warrant. Thus, Plantinga’s model does not lead to relativism.

Interestingly, Plantinga does concede that practitioners of other theistic religions could, like the Christian, argue with equal cogency that, say, a Muslim version of Plantinga’s model is epistemically possible, philosophically unobjectionable given the truth of Islam, and probably warranted in a way similar to that described in the model if Islam is true. But such a conclusion does not support relativism. It merely shows that there is no de jure objection to other theistic faiths independent of de facto objections to them. Perhaps even more significantly, it is not the case that such a concession holds for any belief set; in particular it does not hold, in Plantinga’s view, for naturalism.148 For if naturalism is true, then it is not likely that our belief-forming mechanisms are reliable, since they are not aimed at truth but are merely selected for survival. Thus, although adherents of other theistic religions could cogently argue on behalf of their religions what Plantinga argues on behalf of Christian belief, the same cannot be said for what, in the Western academic world, is the main alternative to Christian belief today.

Reflecting on these objections, Andrew Moon observes that back in the 1980s, it was understandable for Plantinga to take seriously the Great Pumpkin Objection or the Son of Great Pumpkin Objection, since at that time no developed normative theory undergirded Reformed Epistemology. But now that it is so undergirded and can be wedded with a variety of substantive epistemological theories, it has become “very resilient in the face of potential objections.”149

A great deal more could be said about Plantinga's religious epistemology, such as his claim that it constitutes a sort of theistic argument, since no naturalistic account of warrant and, in particular, proper functioning is forthcoming, or his claim that naturalism cannot be rationally affirmed, since the naturalist can have no confidence that his cognitive faculties produce true beliefs as opposed to beliefs merely conducive to survival; but what has been said provides a general picture of his epistemology.

2.2.2 Recent Adjustments to Reformed Epistemology

During the years following the completion of Plantinga's warrant trilogy, it has come to be widely appreciated that Reformed epistemology actually consists of two stand-alone elements: proper functionalism, a theory of epistemic warrant in terms of the proper functioning of one's cognitive faculties, and Reformed Epistemology proper, an account of the way in which Christian theistic beliefs can be properly basic with respect to justification, rationality, and warrant.150 To avoid confusion we shall refer to these two elements as proper functionalism and proper basicality respectively. It is now recognized that properly basicality can be successfully married to a wide range of diverse epistemological theories and so is not wedded to proper functionalism. This realization is important for the systematic theologian, since proper functionalism is obviously not taught by Scripture, even if Scripture treats our God-given faculties as reliable when functioning as God intended them to. The theologian who holds on scriptural grounds that Christian beliefs are properly basic thus need not advocate or defend proper functionalism.151

Furthermore, many philosophers have sought to tease apart evidentialism from classical foundationalism, construing evidence more broadly than propositional evidence. For example, Dougherty and Tweedt take evidentialism to be the thesis that epistemically

justified belief requires sufficient evidence of some sort,152 more precisely,

E. A subject S is justified in believing a proposition p if and only if S's evidence sufficiently supports p,

where "S's evidence" refers to the evidence on the basis of which S believes p.153 Such evidence need not be propositional, much less consist of the sort of propositional beliefs demanded by the classical foundationalist. Since on Plantinga's theory properly basic beliefs are appropriately grounded in experience, that experience can be construed as non-propositional evidence supporting such beliefs.

(E) becomes especially innocuous if it is conjoined with what has come to be known as phenomenal conservatism, the view that if it seems to someone that p is true, then he is prima facie justified in believing that p, more precisely,

PC. If it seems to S that p, then, in the absence of defeaters,154 S is thereby justified in believing that p.

Together (PC) and (E) imply that if it seems to S that p, then in the absence of defeaters S has evidence that sufficiently supports p.

Phenomenal conservatives nominalize how it seems to S as S's "seemings," which refers to experienced mental states with propositional content and a distinct phenomenal character.155 Seemings, like beliefs, have propositional content in that, just as S may believe that p, so it may seem to S that p. But whereas beliefs are true or false and typically corrigible, seemings are veridical or non-veridical and uniformly incorrigible. Moreover, seemings have a forceful phenomenal character: they have a sort of felt veridicality that inclines us to believe their propositional content.156 William Tolhurst gives a typical characterization of seeming:

S. It seems to S that x is Φ only if

S is in a mental state m, whose content is that x is Φ,

m has a property (felt veridicality) which

evokes in S the felt demand that S believe that x is Φ and

would, other things equal, evoke in S the felt demand that S believe that m is veridical if S were to reflect on his experience of m.

Seemings are thus causally and epistemically prior to beliefs in that they support beliefs. In some cases a seeming may be so forceful that even though we have learned not to believe that p, it still seems to us that p. A graphic example is the familiar Müller-Lyer optical illusion of two line segments of equal length which seem to be unequal:

Two illustrations. 1. A horizontal line with inwards arrow at both ends. 2. A horizontal two-way arrow.

Figure 1 Müller-Lyer optical illusion.

An example of a non-sensory seeming that we disbelieve is Frege's Axiom V stipulating a principle of universal comprehension for set

membership in naïve set theory.157 Beliefs, then, are distinct from seemings and may be supported by them.

Chris Tucker has emphasized that given phenomenal conservatism, evidence comes cheap, so that evidentialism's demand for evidence is easy to satisfy.158 For as long as it seems to S that p and S has no defeater of how things seem, S has adequate supporting evidence to believe that p. Indeed, Tucker faces the objection that justification comes all too easy on phenomenal conservatism, for even in a case of demonic deception, it still seems to S that p. Tucker proposes to fix this alleged problem by adding an additional requirement on properly basic beliefs in order for them to enjoy not merely justification but warrant: "The proponent of phenomenal conservatism … should say that non-inferential justification is the property a proposition has when believing it is an appropriate response to an experience, whether that experience is caused appropriately or not … however, non-inferential warrant additionally requires that the experience be caused in some appropriate way."159 Thus, although the demonically deluded victim's beliefs are justified because they are appropriate responses to his seemings, still they are not warranted because his seemings, unbeknownst to him, are caused in an inappropriate way.160

Plantinga is quite open to evidentialism as expressed by (E) so long as one construes evidence broadly to include non-propositional, non-inferential grounds.161 He simply reminds us that evidentialism has been traditionally understood in terms of classical foundationalism with its demand for propositional, inferential evidence for non-basic beliefs.162 Give up that demand, as the phenomenal conservative does, and Plantinga is happy to agree that seemings count as evidence for our properly basic beliefs. Drawing upon the distinction between justification, rationality, and warrant, Plantinga reflects that with regard to justification, "I took it to be fairly obvious that Christian belief… can be deontologically justified, even if taken in the basic way: one need be flouting no intellectual duties in thus embracing it." As for rationality, "I also thought it fairly obvious that (basic) Christian belief is or can be… rational; i.e., there need be no lack of proper

function in the operation of cognitive faculties ‘downstream’ from experience. Here I take experience to include ‘seemings’ – for example, the seeming-to-be-true of various propositions.” Finally, as to warrant, what about “upstream” of experience – “what about experience and those seemings?”

Here too, of course, there can be malfunction. Upon being appeared to in a familiar fashion, it seems to me that I see a tree. Of course things could go wrong; that way of being appeared to could fail to produce the appropriate seeming-to-be-true, either producing no seeming at all, or producing an inappropriate seeming… . This brings us to warrant. I argued that a belief has warrant if it is produced by cognitive powers that are functioning properly in a congenial epistemic environment according to a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth.163

Thus, there is no inherent conflict between evidentialism and the proper basicality of Christian beliefs with respect to justification, rationality, and warrant.

2.2.3 Assessment of Plantinga’s Religious Epistemology

With these developments in mind, what might be said by way of assessment of Plantinga’s religious epistemology?

2.2.3.1 Criticisms of the Public Project

It will be recalled that Plantinga embarked on two projects, a public one and a private, Christian one. His public project was to show that there is no successful de jure objection to Christian belief apart from presupposing Christianity’s falsehood. Let us consider two criticisms that have been made of this public project.

2.2.3.1.1 Vicious Circularity

Some philosophers have complained that on pain of vicious circularity, Plantinga's model leaves us with no way of being justified in thinking that Christian belief is warranted. For so far forth, all that we know is that if Christian theism is true, then it is warranted. But what entitles us to think that it is true?164

Now at first blush, such a question might seem maladroit: the very purpose of the model is to give an account of how we know that Christian theism is true, namely, through the proper functioning of the sensus divinitatis and the witness of the Holy Spirit. But the critic charges that such an appeal is viciously circular, for it assumes the truth of the model, which is what is in question. John Bishop explains:

once the deliverances of the special cognitive faculty are included amongst the believer's basic experiential evidence, the evidential requirement on reasonable belief is surely satisfied… . But … there will need to be conditions sufficient for justified faith that are 'internalist' – that is, conditions whose obtaining is, at least indirectly if not directly, accessible to believers themselves… . It may be true… that if God exists such experiences meet externalist criteria for conveying knowledge, even though the truth of the beliefs concerned remains open to reflective 'internalist' doubt. On an externalist account, that is, one might lack independent evidence sufficient to confirm that one has knowledge that God exists while in fact possessing that very knowledge. And one might thus refute an objector who claims that without adequate evidence one cannot genuinely know. But this consideration is still insufficient to secure entitlement to theistic faith – if, as may be argued, that entitlement requires that one has evidence adequate to justify commitment to the truth that God exists. For, one has such evidence only conditionally on God's existence – but it is precisely entitlement to believe that God exists that is at issue….

… the ‘special knowledge’ model… leaves unanswered the reflective believer’s concern about entitlement. Attempting to settle that concern by meeting the evidential requirement leads to circularity: believers are to accept theological truths on divine authority, yet the truth that there is such an authority… is amongst those very truths that are to be accepted on divine authority – indeed, it is the crucial one.165

At issue here is not whether one’s Christian belief was reliably formed but how one knows that one’s Christian belief was reliably formed. If all one has to offer is a circular argument for that conclusion, then one’s justification for thinking that one’s Christian belief was reliably formed seems to be defeated.

Reformed epistemologists have responded variously to this objection. For his part, Plantinga seemed to rest content with his conditional claim in so far as his public project is concerned. With respect to this project, in contrast to his private project, which is aimed at Christians, he says:

it would not be appropriate to start from Christian belief; this is a project… addressed to all philosophers… not just Christians. And here what I offer to the non-Christian or nontheist philosopher is the proposition that if Christian belief is true, then (very likely) it has warrant, and has it in something like the way the model suggests. Given that there is no independent route to determining the warrant of Christian or theistic belief, it follows that there aren’t any decent de jure objections that do not presuppose the falsehood of such belief.166

On the other hand, William Alston acknowledges the circularity of accepting the reliability of Christian religious experience but argues that such experience is in this respect on a par with sensory experience, so that if we are practically justified in taking the latter to be a source of knowledge, we are pari passu similarly justified in taking our Christian experience to be a source of knowledge.167

Thus, neither Plantinga nor Alston defends the use of circular arguments to establish the epistemic justification of Christian belief.

By contrast, in an important paper Andrew Moon challenges the assumption that circular arguments always fail to confer epistemic justification upon target beliefs.168 Distinguishing between malignant circularity and benign circularity, Moon argues that a justificatory argument for the reliability of one's Christian belief can be benignly circular and therefore permissible in response to de jure objections (or, to connect with current philosophical nomenclature, what are known as debunking arguments169) against the permissibility of Christian belief.170 The debunker claims that Christians are not justified in the categorical claim that it is probable that their Christian belief is formed reliably. Moon disputes this by arguing that a circular argument for such a conclusion can be justificatory.

Following Plantinga, Moon differentiates between a defeater-defeater and a defeater-deflector.171 A defeater-defeater is used to restore the epistemic credentials of a belief which is facing a defeater. But a defeater-deflector prevents a would-be defeater from becoming a defeater in the first place. To illustrate, suppose that you learn that a certain drug distorts the color vision of 95% of the people who ingest it and that your dinner had been tainted with that drug. You now have a defeater for the reliability of your color vision. Obviously, you cannot defeat that defeater by appealing to how clearly the colored objects around you appear, for the reliability of your color vision has now been radically called into question. Appealing to your color vision to establish the reliability of your color vision would be malignantly circular. You could, however, obtain a defeater-defeater in support of your color vision's reliability by means of an independent faculty. Suppose, for example, that a trustworthy friend who did not ingest the drug verifies the color you perceive of each of the objects you see. The ostensible defeater is now no longer a defeater.

Alternatively, you could enjoy a defeater-deflector of the would-be defeater. Suppose that before dinner a scientific expert informs you on the basis of a blood test that you are among the 5% who are immune to the drug. In this case the would-be defeater never becomes a defeater in the first place. It is deflected by what you already believe. In this case you are perfectly justified in appealing to your color vision to defend the veridicality of the colors you see because you have no reason to doubt the reliability of your color vision. Your appeal to your perception of colored objects in defense of the reliability of your color vision is circular but benignly so, since it has not been called into question.

Now consider Hannah, a Christian who believes that her Christian belief is reliably formed. Even if Hannah cannot permissibly just assume that her Christian belief is reliably formed, Hannah can deflect the debunker's would-be defeater via the following argument:

Christian belief is true.

If Christian belief is true, then it is probably true that My Christian belief is formed reliably.

Therefore, it is probably true that My Christian belief is formed reliably.

Hannah believes (II) on the basis of Plantinga's argument for the claim that if Christian belief is true, then it very likely has warrant in something like the way his model suggests and on her belief that her personal Christian belief was not unusually formed. She figures that "Given Christianity's truth, Christian belief is probably not merely the result of unreliable wishful thinking or dysfunction, as the Freud–Marx objection claims; it is more likely the result of a testimonial, belief-forming process that involves the Holy Spirit's reliable guidance."172 Moreover, she knows that she formed her Christian belief through hearing the Gospel preached, seeking God in prayer, and so on. So Hannah can justifiably believe that if Christianity is

true, her Christian belief involved the Holy Spirit's activity and so was reliably formed.

But what about (I)? Assume for the sake of argument that Hannah's belief in (I) is prima facie warranted. Does it succumb to a debunking argument? If we assume with Plantinga that there is no independent route to determining the warrant of Christian belief,173 Hannah's argument for (III) is epistemically circular.174 For her basis for believing that My Christian belief is formed reliably is that that belief was formed by a particular process, the witness of the Holy Spirit, which leads her to infer that that process was reliable. But the reason that she believes (I) to be true is that belief in (I) was formed by that very process. It is a properly basic belief grounded in the witness of the Holy Spirit. If we were to ask Hannah, "How do you know that Christianity is true?" she would reply, "Because the Holy Spirit bears witness to me that it is true." "And how do you know that the Holy Spirit bears witness to you that it is true?" we ask. She replies, "Because Christianity is true."

Moon acknowledges the circularity of Hannah's argument, but he maintains that the circularity is benign. We may suppose that Hannah is initially justified in believing (I) in a properly basic way grounded in the witness of the Holy Spirit. This premise never faces a de jure defeater because such a defeater is deflected. Moon asks whether Hannah should be doubting that her Christian belief is formed reliably and answers,

The only plausible reason to think that is if she has some good reason to: a defeater. But in this case, Hannah can use her modus ponens argument to prevent herself from ever gaining a defeater in the first place. Hannah is wielding a defeater-deflector and not a defeater-defeater. If we took Hannah to be wielding a defeater-defeater, then her belief in (I) (or Christianity) would already be defeated (unjustified) by the de jure objection, and so she could not use it as a premise to defeat the defeater. Fortunately, she is

wielding a defeater-deflector, and thus, preventing any defeat from happening in the first place.175

So, to return to Bishop's concerns above, Hannah is perfectly entitled to her Christian belief and so to her further belief that her Christian belief is formed reliably, for the circularity involved in her argument to that effect is benign.

Moon concludes that premise (I) is for Hannah "an epistemically self-promoting proposition," that is to say, if she justifiedly believes it, then she gains good evidence that her belief in it is reliably formed. In general, p is an epistemically self-promoting proposition for S if S also justifiedly believes a conditional of the form: if p, then my belief that p was (probably) formed reliably.176 This terminology recalls Plantinga's characterization of the central truths of the Gospel as self-authenticating. Plantinga's public project thus survives debunking arguments in support of a de jure objection to Christian belief.

Whether, then, we rest content with Plantinga's conditional claim or hold with Moon that we can have benignly circular justificatory reasons for thinking that our Christian belief is reliably formed, Plantinga's public project survives the charge of vicious circularity.

2.2.3.1.2 Religious Disagreement

A second oft-discussed de jure objection to Plantinga's public project concerns cases of religious disagreement.177 The Muslim or the Mormon also claims to have a witness of God's Spirit or a "burning in the bosom" which authenticates to him the truth of his non-Christian belief. Christian claims to a subjective experience seem to be on a par with similar non-Christian claims. Since proponents of such faiths are one's epistemic peers, the fact of disagreement ought to cause the Christian (not to speak of the Muslim or Mormon) to experience a reduction in his credence in Christianity to the point of being in doubt about it.

Now insofar as such an objection is based upon the analogy to secular cases in which epistemic peers, for example, scientists, disagree with respect to some statement, such objections are nugatory, since in the case of Christian belief proponents of non-Christian religions cannot be viewed as one's epistemic peers, for the Christian has a genuine witness of the Holy Spirit, while they do not. As a Christian I have reason to think that I have access to non-propositional evidence, namely, the inner witness of the Spirit, to which they do not and that my beliefs are reliably formed, namely, via the Spirit's witness, whereas theirs are not.178 The existence of an authentic and unique witness of the Spirit obviously does not exclude the existence of false claims to such a witness. How, then, does the existence of false claims of the Spirit's witness to the truth of a non-Christian religion do anything logically to undermine the fact that the Christian believer does possess the genuine witness of the Spirit? Why should the Christian be robbed of his joy and assurance of salvation simply because someone else falsely pretends, sincerely or insincerely, to the Spirit's witness? If a Mormon or Muslim falsely claims to experience the witness of God's Spirit, that does nothing to undermine the veridicality of one's Christian experience.

Someone may insist, "But how do you know that your experience isn't also spurious?" That question has already been answered: the experience of the Spirit's witness is, as Plantinga says, self-authenticating for him who really has it. The Spirit-filled Christian can know that his claim to the Spirit's witness is reliable despite the false claims made by persons adhering to other religions.

Perhaps the most plausible spin to put on this objection is to say that false claims to a witness of the Holy Spirit ought to undermine one's confidence in the reliability of the cognitive faculties which form religious beliefs, since those faculties apparently so often mislead people. The fact that so many people apparently sincerely, yet falsely, believe that God's Spirit is testifying to them of the truth of their religious beliefs ought therefore to make us very leery concerning our own experience of God.

There are at least two things wrong with this construal of the objection. First, the Christian need not say that non-Christian religious experience is simply spurious. It may well be the case that adherents of other religions do enjoy a veridical experience of God as the Ground of Being on whom we creatures are dependent or as the Moral Absolute from whom values derive or even as the loving Father of mankind. So the Christian is not at all committed to claiming that the cognitive faculties responsible for people's religious beliefs are fundamentally unreliable. Second, the objection unjustifiably assumes that the witness of the Holy Spirit is merely the product of human cognitive faculties or is indistinguishable from their outputs. On Christian theism the Holy Spirit's witness is not the output of a human faculty. Indeed, non-Christian religious experience, such as Buddhist or Hindu religious experience, is typically very different from Christian experience. Why should I as a Christian think that when a Mormon claims to experience a "burning in the bosom" he is having an experience qualitatively indistinguishable from the witness of the Holy Spirit that I enjoy? There is no reason to think that non-veridical religious experiences are indistinguishable from the witness of the Holy Spirit. One way to get some empirical evidence for this would be simply to ask ex-Mormons and Muslims who have become Christians if their experience of God in Christianity is identical to what they had before their conversion.

Someone might say, "But can't neuroscientists artificially induce in the brain religious experiences which are non-veridical and yet seem to be like the witness of the Holy Spirit?" In fact, this is not true. The sort of religious experiences which have been artificially induced by brain stimulus have been more akin to pantheistic religious experiences, a sense of oneness with the All, rather than Christian experience of God's personal presence and love. But more importantly, the fact that a non-veridical experience can be induced which is qualitatively identical to a veridical experience does nothing to undermine the fact that there are veridical experiences and that we are rational in taking our experiences to be veridical. Otherwise,

one would have to say that because neuroscientists can artificially cause us to see and hear things that are not really there, our senses of sight and hearing are unreliable or untrustworthy! Just because a neurologist could stimulate my brain to make me think that I am having an experience of God is no proof at all that on some occasion when he is not stimulating my brain I do not have a genuine experience of God. So the objection to a genuine witness of the Spirit on the basis of false claims to such an experience does not undermine my rationally trusting in the deliverances of the Holy Spirit's witness.

Consider then the case of a Christian confronted with an adherent of some other world religion who also claims to have a self-authenticating experience of God. Alston observes that this situation taken in isolation results in an epistemic standoff.179 For neither person knows how to convince the other that he alone has a veridical, rather than delusory, experience. This standoff does not undermine the rationality of the Christian's belief, for even if his process of forming his belief is as reliable as can be, there is no way he can give a noncircular proof of this fact. Thus his inability to provide such a proof does not nullify the rationality of his belief. But although he is rational in retaining his Christian belief, the Christian in such circumstances is at a complete loss as to how to show his non-Christian interlocutor that he is correct and that his interlocutor is mistaken in his respective beliefs.

How is one to break this deadlock? Alston answers that the Christian should do whatever he can to search for common ground on which to adjudicate the crucial differences between their competing views, seeking to show in a noncircular way which of them is correct. If, by proceeding on the basis of considerations that are common to both parties, such as sense perception, rational self-evidence, and common modes of reasoning, the Christian can show that his own beliefs are true and those of his non-Christian interlocutor false, then he will have succeeded in showing that the Christian is in the better epistemic position for discerning the truth about these matters. Once apologetics is allowed to enter the picture, the objective difference

between their epistemic situations becomes crucial, for since the non-Christian only thinks he has a self-authenticating experience of God, when in fact he does not, the power of the evidence and argument may, by God’s grace, crack his false assurance of the truth of his faith and persuade him to place his faith in Christ.

2.2.3.2 Criticisms of the Private Project

What, then, of Plantinga's private project? How well has he fared in providing an epistemological account of Christian belief from a Christian perspective? Should the Christian theologian adopt Plantinga’s Reformed Epistemology? Here reservations need to be expressed. The aim of the private project is to show that if Christianity is true, then Plantinga’s extended epistemological model or something like it is very probably true. Oddly, Plantinga’s argument in support of this contention is surprisingly thin. All of the intricate machinery concerning proper functioning, cognitive environment, design plan, and so forth, along with the nuanced descriptions of the sensus divinitatis and internal instigation of the Holy Spirit play no role in this argument.

In fact, all we get is about a paragraph or two, quoted above, that if God existed, then he would want us to know him and so would provide a means to do so. Thus, if Christianity is true, it is likely to be warranted. But with this conclusion the traditional Christian evidentialist would enthusiastically concur, adding, “Therefore, it is very likely that God has provided propositional evidence of his existence which is such that all culpable persons can draw a warranted inference that God exists.” At most, then, Plantinga’s argument shows that

If (Christian) theistic belief is true, then it is warranted.

which is neutral with regard to an evidentialist or Plantingian model. Now Plantinga also asserts that

If (Christian) theistic belief is true, the model or something similar is correct.

is probably true; but he seems to provide no argument in support of this assertion. Reflecting on (1) and (2), one might be tempted to infer (2) from (1) and the assumed premise

If (Christian) theistic belief is warranted, the model or something similar is correct.

Now Plantinga argues at length against a proposition deceptively similar to (3), namely,

If (Christian) theistic belief is warranted, then belief in the model or something similar is warranted.

Plantinga is quite clear that our Christian theistic belief can be warranted but that we might not be warranted in believing the model. Indeed, for most Christians (who have never read Plantinga), their Christian theistic belief is warranted, and yet they have no warrant for believing in Plantinga's model, of which they have not even heard. But while Plantinga rejects (4), it seems that he should find (3) unobjectionable. Indeed, (3) would seem to be the crucial premise differentiating Plantinga's view from those of traditional evidentialists, authoritarians, and so on. But so far as I can tell, Plantinga provides no argument at all in support of (3).

In the absence of any philosophical argument for (3), the systematic theologian, in assessing the worth of Plantinga's model as an

account of how believers are warranted in their Christian belief, will turn to Scripture and Christian experience in order to size up the model by its approximation to their deliverances. When we do so, however, the model would seem to be in need of important modifications.

2.2.3.2.1 The Sensus Divinitatis

Consider, first, Plantinga's postulation of a sensus divinitatis. It is worth noting that Plantinga seriously misinterprets Calvin on this score. When the French Reformer spoke of an innate sense of divinity, he meant an awareness of God, just as we speak of a sense of fear, or a sense of foreboding, or a sense of being watched. But Plantinga takes him to mean a cognitive faculty akin to our sense of sight, or sense of hearing, or sense of touch. Nothing in Calvin supports the idea that we have a special inborn cognitive mechanism that produces belief in God.

Now, as Plantinga reminds us, the model is Plantinga's, not Calvin's. But when we turn to Scripture to assess the existence of a sensus divinitatis, neither do we find there any suggestion of a special faculty of the soul which is designed to produce belief in God. In fact, we do not find in Scripture even any unambiguous support for Calvin's weaker notion of an innate awareness of divinity (Jn 1.9 would be an exegetical stretch).

On the other hand, Scripture does explicitly teach that the Holy Spirit works in people's hearts to bring conviction of Christian truth claims, both in the case of the unbeliever and the believer.

First consider the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.180 When a person becomes a Christian, he becomes an adopted son of God and is indwelt with the Holy Spirit: "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith… . And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal 3.26; 4.6). Paul emphasizes the point in Romans 8. Here he explains that it is the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit that

allows us to know that we are God's children: "for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8.15–16). Paul uses the term plērophoria (complete confidence, full assurance) to indicate that the believer has knowledge of the truth as a result of the Spirit's work (Col 2.2; 1 Thess 1.5; cf. Rom 4.21; 14.5; Col 4.12). This assurance of salvation on the believer's part implies certain truths of Christianity, such as "God forgives my sin," "Christ has reconciled me to God," and so on, so that in having assurance of salvation one has assurance of these truths.

The apostle John also makes it clear that it is the indwelling Holy Spirit who gives believers conviction of the truth of Christian belief. "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all know… the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him" (I Jn 2.20, 27). Here John explains that it is the Holy Spirit who teaches the believer the truth of divine things. John is clearly echoing the teachings of Jesus found in John's Gospel, when Jesus says, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14.26). The truth that the Holy Spirit teaches is not the later subtleties of Christian doctrine, most of which would have been unknown to John. Rather what John is talking about is the inner assurance the Holy Spirit gives of the basic truths of the Christian faith such as are found in John's Gospel, what Plantinga calls the great things of the Gospel. This assurance does not come fundamentally from arguments but from the Holy Spirit himself.

Now it might be said on the basis of I Jn 4.1–3 that the testimony of the Holy Spirit is not self-authenticating, but needs to be tested: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which

confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist… .” But such an understanding would be a misinterpretation of the passage. John is not talking about testing the witness of the Spirit in one’s own heart; rather he is talking about testing people who come to us claiming to be speaking by the Holy Spirit. He referred to the same people earlier: “Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us… .” (I Jn 2.18–19). John never encourages the believer to doubt the witness of the Spirit in his own heart; rather he says that if someone else comes claiming to speak by the Holy Spirit, then, since the situation is external to oneself and involves additional truth claims not immediately apprehended, one must test that person in order to determine if his claim is true. But in one’s own life, the inner witness of God’s Spirit is sufficient to assure one of the truths to which he testifies.

John also underlines other teachings of Jesus on the work of the Holy Spirit in his Gospel. For example, according to Jesus it is the indwelling Holy Spirit that gives the believer knowledge that Jesus lives in him and that he is in Jesus, in the sense of being united with him.

And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you… . In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you (Jn 14.16–17, 20).

John teaches the same thing: “And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us… . By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit” (I Jn 3:24; 4:13). John uses his characteristic phrase “by this we know” to emphasize that as Christians we have a confident

knowledge that our faith is true, that we really do abide in God, and God really does live in us. In fact John goes so far as to contrast the confidence which the Spirit's testimony brings to that brought by human evidence:

> This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son (I Jn 5.6–10).

The "water" here probably refers to Jesus' baptism, and the "blood" to his crucifixion, those being the two events which marked the beginning and end of his earthly ministry. "The testimony of men" is therefore nothing less than the apostolic testimony to the events of Jesus' life and ministry. Though John had laid such great weight on precisely that apostolic testimony in his Gospel (Jn 20.31; 21.24), here he declares that even though we quite rightly receive this testimony, still the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit is even greater. As Christians we have the testimony of God living within us, the Holy Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Thus, although arguments and evidence may be used to support the believer's faith, they are never properly the basis of that faith. On the contrary, the witness of the Holy Spirit is plausibly regarded as self-authenticating.181 That is to say that the experience of the Holy Spirit is veridical and unmistakable (though not necessarily irresistible or indubitable) for him who has it; that such a person does not need supplementary arguments or evidence in order to know and to know with confidence that he is in fact experiencing the Spirit of God; that such experience does not function in this case as a

premise in any argument from religious experience to God, but rather is the immediate experiencing of God himself; that in certain contexts the experience of the Holy Spirit will involve the apprehension of certain truths of the Christian religion, such as “God exists,” “I am condemned by God,” “I am reconciled to God,” “Christ lives in me,” and so forth; that such an experience provides one not only with a subjective assurance of Christianity’s truth, but with objective knowledge of that truth; and that arguments and evidence incompatible with that truth are overwhelmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit for him who attends fully to it. For the believer, then, God is not the conclusion of a syllogism; he is the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelling within. How then does the believer know that Christianity is true? He knows because of the self-authenticating witness of God’s Spirit who lives within him.

But what about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of an unbeliever? Since the Holy Spirit does not indwell him, it might be thought that he must rely only upon arguments and evidence to convince him that Christianity is true. But that is not the teaching of Scripture. According to Scripture, God has a different ministry of the Holy Spirit especially suited to the needs of the unbeliever. Jesus describes this ministry in Jn 16.7–11:

It is to your advantage that I go away, for if l do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Here the Holy Spirit’s ministry is described as directed towards “the world,” which for John always signifies those who are unbelieving. His ministry is three–fold: He convicts the unbeliever of his own sin, of God’s righteousness, and of his condemnation before God. The

unbeliever so convicted can therefore be said to know such truths as “God exists,” “I am guilty before God,” and so forth.

According to Paul, were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit, no one would ever become a Christian. The “natural man” left to himself does not even seek God: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God” (Rom 3.10–11). Unregenerate man cannot understand spiritual things: “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2.14). He is hostile to God: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot” (Rom 8.7). As Jesus said, men love darkness rather than light (Jn 3.19). Left to himself, natural man would never come to God.

The fact that we do find people who are seeking God and are ready to believe in Christ when they hear the Gospel is evidence that the Holy Spirit has already been at work, convicting them and drawing them to him. As Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (Jn 6:44).

Therefore, when a person refuses to come to faith in Christ, it is never just because of lack of evidence or because of intellectual difficulties: at root, he refuses to come because he willingly ignores and rejects the drawing of God’s Spirit on his heart. No one in the final analysis really refuses to become a Christian because of lack of arguments; one refuses to become a Christian because he is hostile to God. But anyone who responds to the drawing of God’s Spirit with an open mind and an open heart can know with assurance that Christianity is true because God’s Spirit will convict him that it is. Jesus said, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; if any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority” (Jn 7.16–17). If anyone is truly seeking God, then he will know that Jesus’ teaching is truly from God.

Therefore, we find that for believer and unbeliever alike it is the self-authenticating work of the Holy Spirit that supplies knowledge of Christianity's truth. Thus, while Scriptural teaching inclines against the postulation of a sensus divinitatis, Scripture does support the reality of a testimonium Spiritu sancti internum.

What about the appeal to Christian experience to legitimate the sensus divinitatis? The difficulty here is that it is impossible to distinguish experientially between an inborn sensus divinitatis and the testimonium Spiritu sancti internum. Any awareness of God that one might experience can be as plausibly ascribed to the Spirit's work as to an inborn sense of divinity. In conclusion, we should agree with the proper basicality thesis that belief in the God of the Bible is a properly basic belief and emphasize that it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit that grounds its proper basicality. And because this belief is formed in response to the self-disclosure of God himself, who needs no external authentication, it is not merely rational for us, but constitutes knowledge.

2.2.3.2.2 Religious Seemings

On the basis of his phenomenal conservatism Chris Tucker has proposed a modification of Plantinga's model that would, I think, bring it further into line with the teaching of Scripture on the witness of the Holy Spirit.182 Tucker observes that one's experience of a sunset is evidentially irrelevant to the belief that God loves me. Yet on Plantinga's model God might produce in me this belief when I am in such circumstances. Such a properly basic belief would have no evidential connection with its grounding circumstances but would be entirely arbitrary. The Holy Spirit could directly produce in a person certain Christian beliefs which have no inherent connection with the circumstances which ground it; he could have chosen to produce belief in Christ's atoning death on the occasion of one's sneezing.183

Tucker's phenomenal conservative approach essays to rectify this shortcoming by introducing religious seemings as the intermediate link between the Holy Spirit's work and one's properly basic beliefs. On the occasion of a certain experience, the Holy Spirit makes it seem to a person that Christ died for his sins and so the person comes to believe such a thing on the evidence of such seeming. Thus, although the Holy Spirit might use arbitrarily any experience to produce a religious seeming, the grounding relation between the religious seeming and one's properly basic belief in its propositional content is an evidential relation, given phenomenal conservatism. For now one's properly basic belief is grounded in how things seem to one, not in the occasions or circumstances which the Holy Spirit uses.

Such a modification of Plantinga's model seems quite congenial, and Plantinga himself has spoken freely of seemings which serve to ground properly basic beliefs.184 On the modified account, properly basic Christian beliefs do not just magically appear in consciousness, as it were, but are grounded in experiences of how things seem, and this grounding relation is a non-propositional evidential relation.185 Tucker describes warrant in proper functionalist terms, stating, "at least some religious beliefs are analogous to our perceptual beliefs: they are based on certain experiences (e.g. seemings), and insofar as they are based on those experiences what matters is that the experiences are caused in an appropriate way (e.g. by a properly functioning sensus divinitatis)."186

Such a model seems more consonant with NT descriptions of the experiential nature of the witness of the Holy Spirit. Recall Paul's words, "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8.15–16). Paul is naturally understood to mean, not that the belief that we are God's children just pops into our minds, but that as a result of the Holy Spirit's work we experience a filial relationship with God; he seems to us a loving Father. Similarly, when John speaks of believing "the testimony" which the Spirit bears to the Son in I Jn

5.6–10, he compares it to “the testimony of men”, which is a matter of a person’s testimony’s seeming to be true, and John says, in effect, that in the Spirit’s case that seeming is much stronger than in cases of human testimony. NT scholar James D. G. Dunn has remarked that for NT Christians the witness of the Holy Spirit was not a secret work but an unmistakable experiential reality.187

McAllister and Dougherty complain that on Tucker’s model, even if the relation between one’s seemings and the beliefs they ground is evidential, still the relation between one’s experiences and the seemings is arbitrary. They propose a reductionistic model which removes this arbitrariness. The sensus divinitatis is reduced to our human rational faculties, which unconsciously perceive support relations between the propositional content of our experiences and propositions implying the existence of God, so that they seem to be true. McAllister and Dougherty’s account is, I think, far too intellectualist to be credible.188 Moreover, they do not explain how their account handles the formation of Christian beliefs like Jesus died for my sins, which would have to involve an incredibly reticulate, tacit reasoning process, nor do they show how such a reductionistic account comports with Scripture’s teaching that there is a genuine witness borne by the Holy Spirit to us. The potential arbitrariness they fear between one’s experiences and one’s seemings may be no more than the Holy Spirit’s sovereign freedom to use what experiences he chooses in order to form in us the desired seemings. But there is, in fact, no reason to affirm that such arbitrariness actually exists. On Plantinga’s account the Holy Spirit typically uses the Word of God, whether in the form of the proclamation of the Gospel or the inspired text of Scripture, to produce in people the seeming to be true of what they hear or read, with the attendant beliefs. Such an account comports with scriptural teaching, which does not envision seemings arbitrarily wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; hence, the urgency of the proclamation of the Gospel. “But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? … So faith comes from

what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom 10.14–17). One can envision great benefits from the Holy Spirit's use of the hearing of the Gospel rather than sneezing as the experiences he employs to bear his witness, such as fostering a love of God's Word.

2.2.3.2.3 A Belief-Forming Process?

Despite its shortcomings, however, McAllister's and Dougherty's reductionism does seem scripturally on track in eliminating the sensus divinitatis, which, we have seen, is scripturally unwarranted and superfluous given the NT doctrine of the witness of the Holy Spirit. But in addition, Plantinga's understanding of the witness of the Holy Spirit as a belief-forming process analogous to a cognitive faculty is surely suspicious. It is as though there were a faculty outside me which forms beliefs in me. But since this faculty or process is not mine, not being part of my cognitive equipment, then it cannot literally be true that "I have believed in God," which contradicts both Scripture and experience. Certainly, on Plantinga's model the belief is formed in me, but I am not the one who formed it, and, therefore, I have not truly believed.189

John Greco has similarly argued that by appealing to a properly functioning process rather than to one's properly functioning faculties, Plantinga's model undermines the warrant of beliefs formed by means of the Spirit's instigation.190 Consider the analogy of a benevolent and reliable brain surgeon who, without one's knowledge, manipulates one's brain so as to implant various true beliefs. Even though the patient's relevant beliefs are the result of a cognitive process that is both reliable and designed to produce true beliefs, nevertheless the beliefs in question clearly lack warrant. But now suppose instead that the surgeon merely enables the patient himself to reliably form beliefs, for example, by repairing a natural faculty for receiving testimony or creating a natural faculty that makes receiving a new kind of testimony possible. If the resulting

faculty is sufficiently reliable and well enough integrated with the rest of the person's cognitive architecture, there is no reason not to count the resulting beliefs as warranted.

It seems preferable, therefore, to construe the testimonium Spiritu Sancti internum either literally as a form of testimony and thus its deliverances as properly basic or else as part of the circumstances which serve to ground belief in God and the great truths of the Gospel and thus again the beliefs formed in the context of the Spirit's witness as properly basic. In either case, it is we, employing the soul's ordinary, God-given capacities, who, in response to the Spirit's testimony or in the circumstances of experiencing his prevenient convicting and drawing, come to believe in God and the great things of the Gospel. Such a modification of Plantinga's model is very much in line with the model, for Plantinga himself sometimes speaks of Christian belief formed as a result of the Spirit's witness as a case of beliefs normally formed in response to testimony: "But then this just is a special case of the pervasive process of testimony, by which, as a matter fact, we learn most of what we know."191

2.2.3.2.4 An Intrinsic Defeater-Defeater?

We now come to the question of the relationship between a properly basic Christian belief and an incompatible belief supported by evidence. Although Plantinga's detractors have sometimes characterized his view as fideistic,192 my misgiving is precisely the opposite: that Plantinga seems on the verge of falling into a sort of crypto-evidentialism. For in considering whether a person who holds to belief in God as properly basic may be open to argument, Plantinga appears to allow that belief in God so held may be overcome by argument, so that the theist in order to be rational may have to abandon his belief in God. Granted, Plantinga asserts that the theist in such a predicament may instead abandon belief in one of the argument's premises or in the argument form itself, but the fact remains that if the theist has a greater degree of belief in those

premises and argument forms, then it will be theism that must go. If he is unsure which he believes more deeply, then he will be left in doubt, an existential predicament which is destructive of the spiritual life. Plantinga clearly denies that a person who takes belief in God as basic remains rationally warranted in that belief no matter what counter argument or counter evidence arises.193 The circumstances which ground his belief confer only a prima facie justification, not an ultima facie justification, upon that belief. In his early essay "Reason and Belief in God" Plantinga considers the case of a fourteen-year-old theist who believes in God apart from any argument or evidence and who encounters an objection:

> Like the fourteen-year-old theist… perhaps I have been brought up to believe in God and am initially within my rights in so doing. But conditions can arise in which perhaps I am no longer justified in this belief. Perhaps you proposed to me an argument for conclusion [sic] that it is impossible that there be such a person as God. If this argument is convincing for me – if it starts from premises that seem self-evident to me and proceeds by argument forms that seem self-evidently valid then perhaps I am no longer justified in accepting theistic belief.194

Now many people have been brought up to believe in God, observes Plantinga, but then they encountered various potential defeaters for that belief. "If the believer is to remain justified, something further is called for – something that prima facie defeats the defeaters."195 This is the task of theistic apologetics. For example, if I am confronted with the anti-theistic problem of evil, then "what is required, if I am to continue to believe rationally, is a defeater for that defeater," such as the Free Will Defense.196

But Plantinga's response I find very disquieting. Since almost every intelligent, adult theist is bombarded throughout his education and adult life with multifarious defeaters for theism, it seems that for a great many, if not most, people, rational argument and evidence will be indispensable for the rationality of their faith. But then belief that

God exists will hardly be comparable to other basic beliefs, like I see a tree or I had breakfast this morning, for it will have to be surrounded by an enormous and elaborately constructed citadel, bristling with defensive armaments to ward off the enemy. In such a case, one wonders how much has been gained by making belief in God properly basic. Such faith is a far cry from that spoken of by the Reformed theologians in whose train Plantinga claims to stand. True, one's apologetic defenses do not now come to supply the inferential basis of one's theistic belief, as Plantinga emphasizes.197 The demonstration of the failure of the anti-theistic problem of evil does not, for example, constitute evidence for God's existence. Only if one's defeater-defeaters take the form of positive or offensive apologetic arguments – for example, defeating the problem of evil by arguing from the existence of evil to the objectivity of moral values and thence to God via a moral argument – might one's belief in God cease to be basic on account of one's apologetic (this would occur only if one also regarded one's theistic belief as then inferred from one's argument rather than merely confirmed by it). It is also true that, according to Plantinga, one's defeater-defeater need not be a sophisticated argument, but perhaps simply the knowledge that someone else has argued responsibly against the defeater. But for all these qualifications, it is still the case that in order for one's faith to be rational, a great deal of argument and evidence may be necessary for the believer. So while Plantinga may not lapse back into an objectionable evidentialism per se, he does seem to adumbrate an objectionable sort of neo-evidentialism. According to Plantinga, "the evidentialist objector … should be construed as holding that the theist who believes without evidence thereby violates an intellectual obligation or at any rate displays a flawed noetic structure."198 But with regard to most any intelligent, adult believer, this is a statement with which Plantinga would seem to be in whole-hearted agreement. Belief in God unaccompanied by evidence is irrational.

But a little reflection shows that such an epistemology is as religiously inadequate as the original evidentialism against which

Plantinga objects. Consider, for example, a young German student of pietistic Lutheran upbringing who, desiring to become a pastor himself, goes off to the University of Marburg to study theology. There he sits under various professors of Bultmannian stripe and finds his orthodox theistic faith constantly under attack. He looks about for answers, but finds none in either his reading or in discussions with other people. He feels utterly defenseless before his professors' criticisms, having nothing but the reality of his own experience of a personal God to oppose to their arguments. Now on Plantinga's view as thus far explained, such a student seems to be irrational to continue to believe in God; he has an epistemic obligation to give up his faith.

But surely this is unconscionable. Some persons simply lack the ability, time, or resources to come up with successful defeaters of the anti-theistic defeaters they encounter. Plantinga claims to have shown that there are, to his knowledge, no irrefutable defeaters of theism. Well and good; but what about all the millions of persons prior to Plantinga who were not so ingenious, who did not, for example, see the distinction between a defense and a theodicy, and who, like Plantinga, found all proposals of the latter sort "tepid, shallow, and ultimately frivolous?"199 Even Plantinga's colleague Philip Quinn, himself a distinguished theistic philosopher, confesses that he sees no solution to the problem of evil and therefore has "very substantial reasons" for believing that God does not exist.200 The point is not whether Quinn is correct – indeed, Plantinga does, it seems to me, supply defeaters of the purported defeaters of theism – but rather that there must be millions of people like Quinn, who, due to contingent factors of geography and history, are at a loss as to how to answer the objections to theism they confront. Are we going to deny them, on pain of irrationality, the joy and privilege of personal faith in God? If so, will they therefore be eternally lost for not believing in God? To answer affirmatively seems unthinkable; but to answer negatively seems contrary to the biblical teaching that all men are "without excuse" if they do not believe in God (Rom 1.20).

So long as we allow defeaters of Christian belief, the sting of evidentialism has not been removed.

It is for this reason, therefore, that Plantinga's later clarification and development of his view of the relationship between a basic belief and potential defeaters is so welcome. In his reply to Quinn, Plantinga deals with the question of whether an intellectually sophisticated adult can take belief in God as properly basic. In treating defeaters of theistic belief, Plantinga differentiates between two types of refutation the theist might give: he might produce an undercutting defeater for the purported defeater, that is, show that the defeater has not been proved; or he might offer a rebutting defeater, that is, show that the purported defeater is false. We may call both types of responses refutatory defeaters because they attack the purported defeater itself and aim to show that it is not rationally compelling. But there is another way to defeat an alleged defeater: one may produce what we might call an overwhelming defeater of the defeater, that is, produce a defeater which, while not directly refuting the potential defeater, nevertheless exceeds it in warrant and is incompatible with it, so that the potential defeater is overpowered by the new defeater.

Now what Plantinga asks is why some belief itself may not have sufficient warrant to overwhelm its potential defeaters. Plantinga imagines a situation in which a person is accused of a crime which he knows from memory that he did not commit. Moreover, the evidence is solidly stacked against him, such that an impartial jury of his peers would convict him of wrongdoing. Is he himself obligated to believe on the basis of the evidence in his own guilt? Obviously not, if the warrant for his properly basic memory belief is greater than the warrant conferred by the forensic evidence! In such a case the non-propositional evidence in support of his memory belief overwhelms the propositional evidence lodged against him.

If a basic belief p has more warrant than a potential defeater q, then p is an intrinsic defeater of q – what Plantinga calls an intrinsic defeater-defeater. Applying this condition to Christian belief,

Plantinga suggests that “Perhaps the non-propositional warrant enjoyed by your belief in God is itself sufficient to turn back the challenge offered by the alleged defeaters, so that your theistic belief is an intrinsic defeater-defeater.”201

With this Plantinga has moved, I think, in the direction of the Reformers and the NT. For the Reformed theologians, the basis of faith which could withstand all rational attacks was the testimonium Spiritu Sancti internum. For Calvin, apologetics was a useful discipline to confirm the Spirit’s testimony, but it was by no means necessary. A believer who was too uninformed or ill-equipped to refute anti-theistic arguments was rational in believing on the basis of the witness of the Spirit even in the face of such unrefuted objections.

The Reformers’ doctrine was grounded squarely on the NT teaching about the work of the Holy Spirit. The inner witness of the Holy Spirit on behalf of Christian belief makes such belief an intrinsic defeater-defeater of any challenges brought against it. For it is God’s will that we persevere in saving faith despite all challenges brought against it. Given the harsh warnings in the NT against apostasy, it is inconceivable that it might be that God’s will for one of his children that he should apostatize. The author of Hebrews is especially emphatic:

We are his [God’s] house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

‘Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion… .’

Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, while it is said,

‘Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion’ (Heb 3.6–15).

As Christians we have God living within us and speaking to us, enabling us to persevere in faith. Apostasy is attributed to an evil, unbelieving heart, which is contrary to God’s will and command. Those who do not persevere have no share in Christ.

The author of Hebrews later expands on this theme:

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt. For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned. Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation (Heb 6.4–9).

It is inconceivable that it could be God’s will that a regenerate Christian, one who is a partaker of the Holy Spirit, should crucify God’s Son afresh and hold him up to contempt. That God does not excuse such apostasy is evident in the comparison of the dreadful end of apostates to unfruitful land that is to be burned. In contrast to the destiny of the recipients of Hebrews, the apostates’ lot is not things that belong to salvation.

Finally, returning a third time to this theme, the author exhorts his audience:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful… . For if we sin deliberately after receiving

the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge his people.’ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10.23–31).

Here once more the terrible fate of apostates is vividly described. Noteworthy is the fact that they are said to have outraged the Spirit of grace, the Holy Spirit of whom they had become partakers (6.4) and who spoke to them (3.7). But thanks be to God, he who promised is faithful, and if we listen to his voice we shall persevere! What is at issue here is not so much the perseverance of the saints as God’s preservation of the saints.

Now many, if not most, of us reading these words will doubtless say that we do not enjoy so powerful a witness of the Holy Spirit as to ground Christian belief as an intrinsic defeater-defeater. While that fact may well be a call to self-examination to see whether there be in any of us an evil, unbelieving heart, leading us to fall away, the more fundamental point to be made is that the testimony of the Holy Spirit can vary in intensity as the circumstances require. Most of us have extrinsic defeaters of the defeaters brought against Christian belief, that is to say, propositions distinct from those belonging to Christian belief itself that serve to defeat the defeaters brought against it, and therefore have no need of an overwhelming witness of the Spirit. But someone in a disadvantaged situation, such as a university student in the old Soviet Union who has no access to such extrinsic defeater-defeaters, may be vouchsafed a more powerful witness of the Holy Spirit, enabling him to persevere even in the face of unanswerable defeaters. God is faithful and will supply what his children need to persevere in faith.

Now the Christian evidentialist might agree that God is faithful and therefore conclude that God will supply to every Christian the evidence necessary to defeat the defeaters he faces. But such a claim is unrealistic. The vast majority of the human race have neither the time, training, nor resources to develop a full-blown defense of Christian belief in response to defeaters of their faith. Rather the steadfastness of their faith is, as Scripture says, based on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

Intriguingly, Andrew Moon addresses the objection that “my strategy makes it impossible for Hannah’s Christian belief to ever get defeated since she can always flat-footedly appeal to the Holy Spirit any time a defeater looms. Hannah is thereby rationally sealed from open-mindedness about the possible falsity of her belief. This indicates that the strategy is problematic.”202

Moon’s first response to this curious objection is that “Hannah can still gain defeaters by considering de facto objections to Christian belief, say, arguments from evil or arguments that Christianity is logically incoherent… . So, open-mindedness is not ruled out.”203 Now Moon is quite correct that Hannah can gain defeaters of her Christian belief; but it would be sinful for her to do so. We can grieve and quench the Holy Spirit within us (Eph 4.30; I Thess 5.19). Apostasy is a real and terrifying possibility. “Therefore,” as the author of Hebrews warns, “We must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb 2.1). Where Moon errs, rather, is equating open-mindedness with openness to apostasy. Without being open to the latter, we can be open-minded in considering arguments and objections fairly and objectively, even admitting it when we do not have an extrinsic defeater-defeater of an objection brought against us. In any case, the objector’s argument is logically fallacious. One can be open to the defeat of one’s belief even though that belief is, in fact, indefeasible. Hannah could be open to the defeat of her Christian belief even though that belief is immune to defeat, just as Jesus was open to temptation, even though he was, in fact, impeccable.

Moon’s second response is that Hannah could also gain a defeater for believing premise (II): that if Christian belief is true, then it is probably true that My Christian belief is formed reliably. Part of the reason Hannah thought her Christian belief was reliably formed (given Christianity’s truth) was that she formed it in a customary way. But Hannah could gain compelling evidence that she had taken a drug that both made her hallucinate the whole thing and also erased her memory of taking the drug. The assumption here seems to be that Hannah is not in fact a regenerate Christian indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Counterfeit religious experiences are obviously possible. But if Hannah is a genuine Christian to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness, then it is hard to see how she could acquire a defeater of (II). Hannah’s belief in (II) was supposed to have been partially based on Plantinga’s argument for the proposition that If Christian theism is true, then it is likely to be warranted, and we can imagine Hannah’s losing confidence in that argument. But it is hard to see how she could come to abandon (II), given that her belief in (I) is the result of the Spirit’s work. For if (I) is a self-promoting proposition, then Hannah, even if she sees that her belief was connected historically with drug abuse, remains convinced of (I) and, hence, that her present Christian belief is reliable.204 So short of committing apostasy, Hannah will maintain her belief in (II) along with (I). There is nothing “flat-footed” about Hannah’s steadfastness. Rather she is faithful, just as God is faithful.

2.2.3.2.5 Sin and the Witness of the Spirit

Finally, nothing in Scripture supports Plantinga’s surprising claim that the witness of the Spirit is given only as a divine response to human sin and fallenness. Given that sin quenches the work of the Holy Spirit, it would be surprising if Adam, had he not fallen into sin, would not have enjoyed the fullness and fellowship of the Holy Spirit.205 In fact, we have compelling grounds for rejecting Plantinga’s view in light of the life of our Lord, who, though sinless, was nonetheless led

and inspired by the Holy Spirit in his ministry, just as the OT judges and prophets had been in theirs.206 Plantinga's construal of the witness of the Holy Spirit as something given as God's response to human sinfulness results from his doctrine of the sensus divinitatis as a cognitive faculty functioning properly prior to the fall but then damaged by the noetic effects of the fall – a doctrine that finds no support in Scripture.207

The modified model here proposed seems better suited than Plantinga's original model to serve Christians as an account of how Christian belief is warranted. Nonetheless, it is still so close to Plantinga's approach that he seems correct to say that if Christian belief is true, his model or something very similar is likely to be correct.

2.3 Summary

Distinguishing between practical rationality and epistemic rationality, we have seen that even in cases in which one is not epistemically justified in Christian belief, one might nonetheless be practically justified in Christian belief. One might find oneself in a situation of uncertainty, where one has no idea how to assess the probability of Christian theism, or in a situation in which one is in doubt, lacking preponderant evidence for or against Christian belief, and yet in such situations be practically justified in Christian belief in view of its great benefits. Indeed, even in circumstances in which it is epistemically probable that Christian belief is false, one might be practically justified in believing because one has considerably higher credence in Christian theism than in any of its individual alternatives.

Moreover, we have seen that Christian belief is plausibly epistemically justified as well. Whatever one makes of proper

functionalism, the Christian theologian should on scriptural grounds affirm the proper basicality of Christian belief with respect to epistemic properties like justification and warrant on the basis of the witness of God's Holy Spirit. Not only is Plantinga's thesis that Christian belief is warranted, if true, defensible, but so is the claim that Christian belief is in fact warranted, whether on the basis of natural theology and Christian evidences or on the basis of a benignly circular argument appealing to the witness of the Spirit. We have proposed several modifications of Plantinga's model in order to bring it more into line with scriptural teaching, including eliminating the sensus divinitatis in favor of the testimonium Spiritu Sancti internum; the addition of religious seemings rather than basic beliefs as the result of the Holy Spirit's work; the construal of the witness of the Holy Spirit, not as a belief-forming mechanism, but as either literal testimony or part of the grounding circumstances of Christian belief; understanding the Holy Spirit's witness as the source of an intrinsic defeater-defeater for those who attend to it, especially those bereft of extrinsic defeater-defeaters; and understanding the role of the Holy Spirit to be independent of the noetic effects of sin rather than given specifically in response to them. Christian theologians are thus deeply indebted to contemporary Christian philosophers for their ground-breaking work in religious epistemology.

3 Concluding Remarks

Our exploration of the relationship between faith and reason has yielded rich rewards. As Christian theologians guided by Scripture, we should recognize that there is a faith conducive to salvation that may be different from secular faith. Moreover, we should recognize the multi-faceted nature of biblical faith, including the distinction between personal faith and propositional faith. Personal, saving faith clearly implies faith in various propositional claims, such as God exists and God raised Jesus from the dead. The key question raised

by contemporary philosophical discussion of the nature of faith is whether faith involves belief. On the basis of our examination of scriptural teaching on faith, we concluded that the propositional faith implied by saving faith does involve a cognitive stance of belief with respect to the relevant propositions. An attitude of mere acceptance or assumption is too weak to do justice to the biblical data on faith. Scripture affirms both that if anyone's will is to do God's will, then he will know (and, hence, believe) that Jesus' teachings are from God and also that Christians who exemplify saving faith share with demons the same cognitive stance toward the faith propositions, namely, belief.

With respect to the question of the rational justification of faith, we have seen that both the practical and the epistemic rationality of Christian belief is defensible. Indeed, Christian theologians may plausibly affirm that on the basis of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit we Christians know that our Christian belief is true and that that belief is for him who does not sinfully quench or grieve the Holy Spirit sufficiently warranted that it defeats any defeater that is brought against it.208

Notes

1 Teresa Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1. Morgan speaks of the language of faith; but clearly it is faith itself that is central to Christianity.

2 The question of justification by faith properly belongs to the locus De gratia not De fide.

3 For helpful surveys and bibliography see John Bishop, "Faith," in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2016 Edition),

https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/faith/; Bradley Rettler, “Analysis of Faith,” Philosophy Compass, 13, no. 9 (2018): e12517; Liz Jackson, “Bibliography on Faith,” March 22, 2022, https://liz-jackson.com/research. Jay Wood observes that “The notion of faith is among the most contested terms in the philosophical and theological lexicon” (W. Jay Wood, “Faith,” in Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Copan [London: Routledge, 2007], 606).

4 Cautioning that “Biblical faith… is far too complex and varied across the relevant contexts to allow brief treatment,” Robert Audi explains, “I am not here doing theology or scriptural interpretation; I am suggesting that there are non-doxastic religiously significant attitudes deserving the name ‘faith'” (Robert Audi, Rationality and Religious Commitment [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 73, 80). Such circumspection is commendable and unusual.

5 Teresa Morgan observes that Christian “pistis [faith], of course, is trust/belief, etc., in the ‘living and true God' who has raised Jesus from the dead, and in his Son who ‘delivers us from the coming wrath' (cf. I Thess 1.10), so its content is distinctive, but there is no reason to suppose that qua trust, belief, etc., it constitutes a different cognitive-affective condition or praxis from pistis towards other gods.” Early Christian communities “are distinctive less because their understanding of the concept and praxis of pistis and related concepts in itself is distinctive … than because they focus pistis on God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the salvation offered to the faithful by God through Christ” (Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 217n26, 508–509). This should allay the concern of Daniel Howard-Snyder that to suppose that there is anything that answers to “Christian faith” thought of “as a psychological attitude, state, stance, or orientation” other than what answers to “faith” more generally “is like supposing that there's a distinctive form of … Christian ingestion and excretion, or pain and pleasure, or belief and desire – which is absurd” (Daniel Howard-Snyder, “Does Faith Entail Belief?” Faith and Philosophy 33, no. 2 [2016]: 154).

6 Uncertainty and subjectivity noted by Lara Buchak, “Reason and Faith,” in The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology, ed. William J. Abraham and Frederick D. Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 61. I cannot but concur with Malcolm and Scott, who write,

“Part of the problem is our linguistic intuitions, for all but the most straightforward cases, are notoriously unreliable (as anybody who has attempted to elicit such judgements in philosophy seminars will appreciate). It is also a problem that one's judgements about linguistic felicity may be affected by one's philosophical views, making such judgements a shaky foundation on which to resolve substantive philosophical issues” (Finlay Malcolm and Michael Scott, “Faith, Belief and Fictionalism,” Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 98, no. S1 [2017]: 264).

Buchak observes that many Christians embrace the notion that faith is belief in the absence of evidence, an intuition shared by many unbelievers as well, as Elizabeth Jackson shows (“The Nature and Rationality of Faith,” in A New Theist Response to the New Atheists, ed. Joshua Rasmussen and Kevin Vallier [New York: Routledge, 2020], 77). Howard-Snyder's brief response to Malcolm and Scott that from the fact that we can talk loosely of having faith while being in doubt it does not follow that we cannot talk strictly of having faith while being in doubt (Daniel Howard-Snyder, “Three Arguments to Think that Faith Does Not Entail Belief,” Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 100 [2019]: 120) does nothing to generate or restore confidence in the reliability of ordinary language as our guide in these matters. It is somewhat surreal when Howard-Snyder speaks confidently of satisfying faith's “demand to take a stand on behalf of the truth of p” without once adverting to scriptural teaching on faith (120). Who or what determines what Christian faith demands?

7 I do not mean to imply that this distinction is exhaustive. Obviously, faith in the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist,

for example, could hardly count as secular faith, even if it is not an instance of saving faith, since regenerate Christians differ on the issue.

8 Obviously, salvation is a theologically rich concept, which will occupy us when we get to the locus De gratia. Here we may construe salvation simply as the attainment of beatitude, which entails redemption from sins.

9 “אָמַן,” by Alfred Jepsen in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, rev. ed., trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 1:323.

10 A meaning overlooked by Daniel J. McKaughan, “On the Value of Faith and Faithfulness,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 81 (2017): 13, one of the few Christian philosophers to engage seriously with the biblical text concerning faith.

11 See Jepsen, “image” 298–309. Summarizing, Jepsen says that “Perhaps the best paraphrases that have been suggested to convey the meaning of he'emin are: “to gain stability, to rely on someone, to give credence to a message or to consider it to be true, to trust in someone” (308).

12 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 1; see also Artur Weiser and Rudolf Bultmann, “πιστεύω κτλ.,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968), 6:174–228.

13 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 31–32. Indeed, “it is rarely possible to confine the interpretation of pistis to a single meaning” (286).

14 See supra, 81–82.

15 For example, Morgan notes that pisteuein hoti in the Gospel of John is not understood “as the deliberate, counter-rational acceptance of something which cannot be known for certain” in the

way that “to have faith that” is often understood in modern religious discourse. “In the gospel, what those who have eternal life believe is true of God or Christ is anything but unevidenced, unverifiable, or counter-rational. It is based on signs, words, scripture, and consequentialism, the accepted reality of God… and above all the ungainsayable immediacy of knowledge when those who are pre-elected are confronted by their Shepherd, the Son of God” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 428).

16 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 306.

17 Morgan explains:

“Paul's main interest is in pistis as relationship-forming and power-mediating. As such, he sees pistis as dominantly an exercise of trust which involves heart, mind, and action. Like all trust, it is intimately connected with belief, on which it depends and which depends on it. That certain things are true, such as that Christ died for human sins and was raised from the dead, is integral to Paul's preaching, and he undoubtedly wants those to whom he preaches to believe them. But this kind of belief is not the essence of Paul's preaching nor of Christian pistis. Essential and distinctive is the holistic pistis-relationship through which hoi pisteuontes understand themselves as released from their sins and in which they hope ultimately to enter God's kingdom” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 261).

18 These terms are not unproblematic, for, on the one hand, propositional faith does involve a relation, viz., the relation between a cognitive agent and a proposition, and, on the other hand, personal faith does not exhaust relational faith, since one may have trust in an animal, e.g., a military canine, or a thing, e.g., one's firearm. Still, saving faith in God is personal faith, whereas propositional faith is not. Morgan draws such a distinction when she says, “Christian pistis… is often understood as sui generis: a unique orientation of

the heart and mind; a relationship between the one who has faith and the object of faith… . Pisteuein, meanwhile, is often connected especially with propositional belief. On this view … to have pistis and pisteuein might mean rather different things (the former, for instance, meaning to exercise trust/obedience towards God or Christ, and the latter to believe certain things about God or Christ)" (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 213–214).

19 This distinction is anticipated in Lutheran theology's distinguishing between faith as notitia, assensus, and fiducia. Saving faith for Luther and Melanchthon was at its heart fiducia or trust in God, but it presupposed assensus (belief) in certain propositional claims which are first understood (notitia). After Martin Chemnitz's Loci theologici (1591) it became standard for post-Reformation dogmatics to understand saving faith to comprise notitia, assensus, and fiducia. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 3:136–155, who affirms that all three aspects of faith are essential (150).

20 Although the question is often framed in terms of whether propositional faith entails belief, that formulation seems to me too strong. The question is whether belief is a necessary condition of faith in the actual world; what faith implies in other possible worlds is hardly our concern.

21 I can find in the NT only one example of something like the statement of necessary and sufficient conditions: "we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope… . we share in Christ if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end" [ean … kataschōmen … eanper … kataschōmen] (Heb 3.6,14). The combination of these conjunctions "ean kai eanper …" is unattested in contemporaneous Greek literature outside the NT according to a database search by Michael Licona.

22 As Bultmann comments, "Paul in Rom 10:9… states the content of Christian faith in a sentence in which he does not simply give his own view but is saying what is obviously self-evident to every

Christian preacher… that acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord is intrinsic to Christian faith along with acknowledgment of the miracle of His resurrection, i.e., acceptance of this miracle as true" (Weiser and Bultmann, "πιστεύω κτλ.," 209).

23 See Weiser and Bultmann, "πιστεύω κτλ," 205, a usage which corresponds to extra-biblical Greek usage, meaning to believe someone's words (178, 197). Bultmann goes on to comment on pistis as "saving faith" that involves "acceptance of the Christian kerygma" in the sense that it "contains the element of believing" what was preached, as well as obedience, trust, hope, and faithfulness (208). "Faith in Christ is used first in the same sense as faith in God, in contrast to those who do not yet know the one God, who do not yet believe in Him, who have first to 'believe' in Him in the sense of acknowledging His existence if they are to be able to 'believe' in Him in the OT sense of the word" (208).

24 Both subjective and objective interpretations are given to these two terms, which seem to stand in apposition to each other. Accordingly, they are probably either both subjective or both objective. The subjective interpretation takes them to be cognitive states of the person who has faith. He has assurance of things hoped for and conviction of things not seen. By contrast, objective interpretations take the terms to denote either the reality or the initial foundations or the guarantee in advance of things hoped for or not seen. Luke Johnson lists no fewer than six variations on these two interpretations (Luke Timothy Johnson, Hebrews: A Commentary [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006], 277). Since the various meanings are all attested extra-biblically, Ben Witherington is right in insisting that "The meaning here can be determined only by context" (Ben Witherington III, Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007], 298). Most commentators think that the subjective interpretation makes the best sense of the passage. Taking faith to be the initial foundations or a guarantee in advance throws hypostasis and elenchos out of apposition, for the things not seen include past events (v. 3) and

present invisible realities (v. 27), not just future realities. How faith could literally be the reality of future or unseen things is wholly obscure. Faith, for example, is not the creation of the universe or the final judgement. The repeated phrase “by faith” (vv. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, etc.) and the statement “without faith it is impossible to please him” (v. 6) make no sense on objective interpretations, as may be clearly seen simply by substituting the relevant terms for “faith.” How men could be commended for their faith (vv. 2, 4, 5, 39) on an objective interpretation is just as baffling, since on such interpretations “faith” is not a property men possessed but some sort of thing. Moreover, is faith really presented here as evidence or proof of things to come rather than assurance of them? Does the author think that faith, which often failed to materialize, serves an apologetic function by supplying evidence for the truth of God's promises? That is highly doubtful. Neither is faith a guarantee of things to come, for the author of Hebrews is all too aware of persons who have apostatized. By contrast the subjective interpretation makes perfectly good sense and has precedents in Heb 3.14 and II Cor 9.4; 11.17. I find Witherington's discussion of the question in his Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians to be the most lucid and convincing treatment (297–300). Some proponents of objective interpretations seem to fear that the subjective interpretation somehow makes faith not an objective reality; but that is a mistake. Faith is an objectively existing cognitive state of men of old by which they won divine approval.

25 It should go without saying that the God of whom the author speaks is precisely the God of Heb 1.1–2: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” There is therefore little point in remonstrating:

“Given, as has often been noted, that atheism is exceedingly rare in the ancient Mediterranean world and Near East, that almost everyone assumes that god or gods exist, and that the only question

for most worshippers is which god(s) to worship, it is exceedingly unlikely that estin here means ‘exists'. It must mean something like, ‘acknowledges that [the God we are talking about] is the one, true, and living God'. Anyone who approaches God must believe that he is the one, true, and living God and that he rewards those who seek him” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 333).

For to assert that the God we are talking about is the one, true, and living God just is to assert that this God exists. Moreover, according to the author, anyone who wants to approach this God must have the two specified propositional beliefs.

26 A point made as well of ordinary language expressions about believing someone, as pointed out by Robert Audi, “Belief, Faith, and Acceptance,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 63 (2008): 88. Cf. Bishop's observation: “When one person trusts another there seems typically to be both a doxastic and a fiducial aspect – there is the person's belief as to the other's trustworthiness and also an active commitment or ‘entrusting' to the other” (John Bishop, “Faith,” §7).

27 Morgan demurs, “Porthein would be an odd word to use of disputing a viewpoint or the content of a proclamation, but it could be used of destroying a relationship” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 266). But Paul is not using porthein to mean “to dispute a viewpoint”; rather he describes his effort to eliminate the heresy via persecution of its adherents. Contra Morgan, it seems rather a strain to read tēn pistin porthein as “a reference to an attempt to destroy the trust, in the sense of ‘the relationship of trust' (or even ‘the bond of trust') between God, Christ, and Christ's followers.” Paul, or rather Saul, did not recognize that such a relationship even existed! Even more implausible is the suggestion that “The earliest meaning of hē pistis in any sense close to ‘the faith'… may have been ‘the (new) covenant'” (291). Morgan does acknowledge the propositional content of Paul's preaching when she says, “It is implicit, of course, that this relationship rests on certain

foundations, which no doubt include certain beliefs about God and Christ, because beliefs are always implicit in trust relationships" (266).

28 For such views, such as Louis Pojman's view of faith as profound hope or Jonathan Kvanvig's view of faith as pursuit of an ideal, see Rettler, "Analysis of Faith," 5; John Bishop, "Faith," §§ 2, 6, 9, 10; Buchak, "Reason and Faith," 57–59.

29 I therefore regard as misleading Buchak's classification of views of faith involving something weaker than belief, such as acceptance or assumption, "weakly-doxastic" views (Buchak, "Reason and Faith," 46). The proponents of these views emphasize that, e.g., acceptance and assumption are not species of belief. Non-doxastic views thus comprise views which take faith to involve something weaker than belief as well as views which take faith to involve something entirely different than belief, such as hope or commitment to an action.

30 Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith: What It Is and What It Is Not," American Philosophical Quarterly 50, no. 4 (2013): 370: "Faith that p is a complex propositional attitude consisting of (i) a positive evaluation of p, (ii) a positive conative orientation toward p, (iii) a positive cognitive stance toward p, and (iv) resilience to new counter-evidence to p."

31 Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Can fictionalists have faith? It all depends," Religious Studies 55 (2019): 449; cf. Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Markan Faith," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 81 (2017): 57.

32 Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith," 360. To avoid disputes about truth, we can rephrase: "considering it good or desirable that p."

33 A possible exception might be the faith spoken of in Heb 11.3 concerning a past event, where the fact that the world was created by the word of God not out of things that appear is surely viewed as good but is not, it seems, desired. Could the author have written, "By

faith we understand that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden”? If so, then the truth of the proposition believed need not be good or desired. Of course, in most scriptural instances of faith, the believer wants it to be the case that p and regards it as good that p, but this typical element may not be indispensable.

34 Luke Timothy Johnson, The Letter of James, Anchor Bible 37A (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 241. Cf. Dale Allison's comment: “In this verse ‘faith' equals ‘belief', for the ‘faith' of demons can be nothing more than the conviction that Israel's God exists. To use later theological terminology, the demons have notitia, not assensus or fiducia” (Dale C. Allison, Jr., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James [London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013], 473). Despite Allison's charming comparison, Johnson is more correct in saying that demonic belief does involve assensus, though not fiducia. Both Johnson and Allison provide helpful backgrounds of “demons” (ta daimonia) and “shudder” (phrissein) in reference to demons.

35 Howard-Snyder, “Can Fictionalists Have Faith?,” 449.

36 Howard-Snyder, “Propositional Faith,” 368.

37 See reflections in Howard-Snyder, “Can Fictionalists Have Faith?,” 450–453.

38 Supra, 85–86.

39 L. Jonathan Cohen, An Essay on Belief and Acceptance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 4.

40 Cohen, Belief and Acceptance, 4.

41 William P. Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” in Faith, Freedom, and Rationality, ed. Jeff Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 5. Cf. William P. Alston, “Audi on Nondoxastic Faith,” in Rationality and the Good: Critical Essays on the Ethics and Epistemology of Robert Audi, ed. Mark Timmons, John Greco, and Alfred R. Mele (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 123–140.

42 Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 6.

43 Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 6.

44 Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 9.

45 Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 10. Similarly, Alston's claim that one can have personal faith in God “while accepting that He exists, rather than firmly believing this” (14) is predicated on a false dichotomy between either acceptance or firm belief.

46 Cf. Alston, “Audi on Nondoxastic Faith,” 134, where Alston gives a similar account of what must be added to acceptance (rather than belief) to get propositional faith: (i) the accepter of p must consider the truth or realization of p to be a good thing; and (ii) one's acceptance that p has to be less than ideally or fully supported by reason, evidence, or experience, at least in one's view of the matter. Alston qualifies (ii), however, by confessing that he cannot say how far below the maximum the epistemic support for p must be in order that the acceptance of p count as faith that p. He says that it may be that there is a gray area in which the support for p is too high for acceptance that p to be faith but too low to automatically result in the belief that p. Alston's account seems to make it impossible to distinguish between faith as acceptance and faith as weak belief, given that (i) is satisfied.

47 Howard-Snyder, “Propositional Faith,” 369–370.

48 Howard-Snyder rejects Alston's imaginary illustrations of acceptance on the grounds that it is implausible that anyone with a measure of “intellectual virtue” would in such situations assert (and thus accept) the relevant proposition. “That's because each of them thinks that, given what they [sic] have to go on, the target proposition is only more likely or more strongly indicated or the least false among the credible options, which is compatible with it being no more likely than its negation (Daniel Howard-Snyder, “The Skeptical Christian,” in Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 8:153). Howard-

Snyder seems to want to challenge the epistemic rationality of their making such an assertion, for he stipulates that the purported accepter must have a certain amount of intellectual virtue. But this stipulation is an illicit importation from a different debate. We are trying to give a dispositional account of accepting p and of believing p, not of so doing rationally. Howard-Snyder conflates accepting p with rationally accepting p. In any case, Howard-Snyder has failed to discuss the conditions of rational acceptance. When he complains that “the skeptical Christian will be disappointed by what Alston has to offer. For what she lacks with respect to belief, she also lacks with respect to acceptance: sufficient evidence, reasons, or grounds to believe – or to accept” (155), he fails to appreciate that to accept one does not need evidence, reasons, or grounds, and therefore acceptance is welcome. Despite all this, it will be useful to have actual examples of acceptance in contrast to belief.

49 See Penelope Maddy, “Believing the Axioms I,” Journal of Symbolic Logic 53, no. 2 (1988): 481–511; Penelope Maddy, “Believing the Axioms II,” Journal of Symbolic Logic 53, no. 3 (1988): 736–764; and her later Defending the Axioms: On the Philosophical Foundations of Set Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), ix. The question will be whether the intrinsic and extrinsic justifications she surveys really provide grounds for believing the axioms to be true rather than for entertaining or accepting the axioms without believing them.

50 Maddy, Defending the Axioms, 1.

51 Maddy, Defending the Axioms, 82.

52 Gideon Rosen and John P. Burgess, “Nominalism Reconsidered,” in The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mathematics and Logic, ed. Stewart Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 517.

53 Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 16–21.

54 He acknowledges that “one can be in an involuntary belief-like state with respect to p without feeling sure of p and without being free of doubt. But my present concern is to exhibit acceptance as an

alternative to strong belief – feeling sure" (Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 242).

55 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 16.

56 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 16.

57 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 16.

58 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 17.

59 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 18.

60 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 17.

61 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 17–18.

62 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 19.

63 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 17.

64 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 20.

65 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 20.

66 Alston notes that H. H. Price in his "magisterial treatise," Belief (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 298, "unfortunately" takes the mental act of assenting to be the acquisition of a belief (Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 242).

67 Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 22.

68 Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith," 363.

69 Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith," 359.

70 See infra, 246–248. We are forced once more, as so often, to get ahead of ourselves.

71 Practical arguments will be discussed shortly (infra, 257–262). On the distinction between epistemic rationality and practical rationality see Jackson, "Nature and Rationality of Faith," 77–78.

72 If, as Howard-Snyder claims, faith that p is compatible with being in doubt that p, it is far from clear that acceptance does not count as faith. Howard-Snyder seems to assume that in order to assert p (and

so accept p) one must think p more probable than not (Howard-Snyder, “Skeptical Christian,” 152). But that is surely not implied in Alston's (or Cohen's) account of acceptance. Alston does not lay it down as a condition of assertion of p that p is thought to be more probable than not. The example of set theorists belies such a condition. I think that people who infer p as the best explanation also frequently have a tendency to assert p even if they do not think p more probable than not, so long as p's probability significantly exceeds that of each of its competitors. So long as they do not believe p, it is not clear why they violate any epistemic duty in so accepting and asserting. In any case, it is critical if we are to avoid confusion that we separate our account of believing p from our account of rationally believing p. For a person who believes p irrationally still believes p.

73 Howard-Snyder, “Propositional Faith,” 359.

74 Albert Einstein, “On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies,” trans. Arthur I. Miller, Appendix to Arthur I. Miller, Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981), 392.

75 See H. Minkowski, “Space and Time,” in The Principle of Relativity, by H. A. Lorentz et al., trans. W. Perrett and G. B. Jeffery (New York: Dover Publications, 1952), 73–91.

76 Arthur Fine, The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism, and the Quantum Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 123. See the statement of Steven Weinberg, Gravitation and Cosmology: Principles and Applications of the General Theory of Relativity (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972), 147:

“At one time it was even hoped that the rest of physics could be brought into a geometric formulation, but this hope has met with disappointment, and the geometric interpretation of the theory of gravitation has dwindled to a mere analogy, which lingers in our language in terms like ‘metric,' ‘affine connection,' and ‘curvature,'

but is not otherwise very useful. The important thing is to be able to make predictions about the images on the astronomers' photographic plates, frequencies of spectral lines, and so on, and it simply doesn't matter whether we ascribe these predictions to the physical effect of gravitational fields on the motions of planets and photons or to a curvature of space and time."

77 Howard-Snyder, "Skeptical Christian," 165.

78 For example, in contrast to pure mathematicians, do scientists not at least want to discover the way the world really is? Do they not often work with assumptions that seem to them most credible? It is striking how scientific assuming meets all the conditions Howard-Snyder lays down for action-guiding assumed in his illustrations (Howard-Snyder, "Three Arguments," 123–124), since such scientific assumings prompt massive and expensive experimental research projects.

79 Howard-Snyder, "Skeptical Christian," 160. "For when one believeflessly assumes that p, one lacks the dispositional profile of disbelief." But surely someone who believes not-p may exhibit dispositions (3), (4), and (6) while also acting as if p in certain contexts.

80 Malcolm and Scott point out that "we commonly assume propositions that we believe or even know to be false without being misleading. For example, in explaining a reductio ad absurdum to someone we assume a premise that we already know from the argument is false" (Malcolm and Scott, "Faith, Belief and Fictionalism," 268). Howard-Snyder responds, "I do not mean to use 'assume' in this way… because, so used, it refers to a propositional attitude that is too little like belief or acceptance" (Howard-Snyder, "Skeptical Christian," 159). That fact does not speak to the nature of assumption, however, but only calls into question the suitability of assumption for Howard-Snyder's analysis of faith.

81 Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, London, 1965, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 118–132.

82 Frederick Suppe, “Afterword – 1977,” in The Structure of Scientific Theories, 2nd ed., ed. Frederick Suppe (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 706–707.

83 Howard-Snyder, “Skeptical Christian,” 154–155. Recall that Howard-Snyder presents his account of assumption precisely in order to deal with such Alstonian cases (see note 48). He thus errs when he asserts that “despite their lack of belief and acceptance, and despite their being in doubt, each of them acts on a certain assumption” (158), for unless the perceived probability of p is 0.5, not-p will have greater credence for them and so they are not in doubt.

84 Howard-Snyder, “Propositional Faith,” 361; Howard-Snyder, “Skeptical Christian,” 450.

85 As emphasized by J. Burke Rea, “Faith, Beliefless Assuming, and Cognitive States: A Reply to Howard-Snyder” (paper presented at the Tyndale House Philosophy of Religion Summer Conference, June 26, 2017). Burke holds that cognitive states are psychological states aimed at descriptively representing reality and that, therefore, beliefless assuming, like desiring, is a non-cognitive state. He says, “One may be taking a practical stand, acting as if p were true. But … practical stands do not require any cognitive state in particular. One may be taking a non-cognitive stand, according to which the truth of propositions is beside the point… . Beliefless assuming is not truth-aimed, it is action-aimed. Hence, it is a practical stance, not a cognitive state.” Nevertheless, pretending that p seems to be a positive cognitive state towards p, imagining p to be true, that is associated with acting as if p. Scott points out that if the non-doxastic view of faith is akin to imagination, then the principle that faith that p is incompatible with disbelief that p will have to be abandoned

(Michael Scott, “Faith, Fictionalism and Bullshit,” Thought: A Journal of Philosophy, 9, no 2. (2020): 101).

86 Kendall L. Walton, Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

87 Malcolm and Scott, “Faith, Belief and Fictionalism,” 268; cf. Finlay Malcolm, “Can Fictionalists Have Faith?,” Religious Studies 54, no. 2 (2018): 215–232. Malcolm and Scott argue convincingly that a non-doxastic view of faith employing assumption as the positive cognitive stance toward p cannot be adequately distinguished from pretending that p. They mislead in calling such a view fictionalism rather than pretense theory. The fictionalist regards the target proposition as false or at least untrue, while the pretense theorist remains neutral about its truth or falsity, maintaining simply that the target proposition is to be imagined to be true. Howard-Snyder in response correctly construes fictionalism as the view that the relevant propositions are untrue but fails to appreciate that fictionalism is not entailed by pretense theory (Howard-Snyder, “Skeptical Christian,” 453–57).

88 Malcolm and Scott, “Faith, Belief and Fictionalism,” 268.

89 Howard-Snyder, “Skeptical Christian,” 458–465. The statement is misleading; they do not pretend to have faith, any more than someone watching a frightening movie pretends to have fear. Rather they pretend that, e.g., God exists or that Jesus is divine, just as the movie goer pretends that, e.g., someone is being tortured, and so the viewer experiences real fear.

90 Howard-Snyder is guilty of an evident non sequitur when he says on the basis of reflecting on his Alston-inspired illustrations of beliefless assuming, “The upshot of these reflections is belief that p is not the only positive cognitive attitude by virtue of which one can satisfy faith that p's demand to take a stand on behalf of the truth of p” (Howard-Snyder, “Three Arguments,” 124). For the stories are intended solely as illustrations of assuming, not of having faith. Thus, they do not speak to whether faith's demand is meant by assuming.

91 Howard-Snyder, “Does Faith Entail Belief?,” 158–159.

92 Daniel Howard-Snyder, “Markan Faith,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 81 (2017): 32–33.

93 Howard-Snyder, “Markan Faith,” 33.

94 Recall Howard-Snyder's distinguishing between a constituent of faith and an entailment of faith (Howard-Snyder, “Does Faith Entail Belief?,” 146).

95 Howard-Snyder, “Markan Faith,” 41.

96 Howard-Snyder, “Markan Faith,” 47.

97 Howard-Snyder, “Markan Faith,” 51.

98 Howard-Snyder, “Does Faith Entail Belief?,” 154.

99 Alston, “Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith,” 7.

100 It is noteworthy as well that while in extra-biblical Greek literature cognitive processes and propositional belief are primarily expressed using the language of thinking (e.g., nomizein), in the NT nomizein is rare, occurring only 14 times, in contrast to 237 times for pisteuein, suggesting that it has taken over the function of expressing, among other things, propositional belief. See Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 29n112, 75, 143.

101 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 427.

102 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 227; cf. 141–142.

103 Teresa Morgan to William Lane Craig, December 18, 2020.

104 Teresa Morgan to William Lane Craig. Cf. her comment, “That certain things are true, such as that Christ died for human sins and was raised from the dead, is integral to Paul's preaching, and he undoubtedly wants those to whom he preaches to believe them” (Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 261).

105 Teresa Morgan to William Lane Craig.

106 So much the worse for Alston's condition (2) of belief! Unbelievers on Paul's view live in a state of denial, being deceived about what they believe.

107 Or, as Michael Scott puts it, b.s. (Michael Scott, “Faith, Fictionalism and Bullshit,” Thought 9 [2020]: 94–104). Since it is paradoxical to say, “Jesus is Lord, but I do not believe this,” the person who makes such a confession without belief is engaged in religious b.s., which calls into question his integrity. Since such a confession is central to the Christian faith, the option of refraining from making such a confession, what Scott calls assertoric honesty, is not open to the would-be Christian. Scott proceeds to argue that if such a confession does not involve assertion and, hence, belief, the non-doxasticist sanctions what he calls hermeneutic religious fictionalism, which seems to be a version of pretense theory that substitutes imagining for believing, with all the attendant dislocations.

108 See supra, 218–221.

109 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 412, 428.

110 Morgan, Roman Faith and Christian Faith, 428. She mentions 3.10; 5.42; 6.69; 8.28, 43; 10.6; 13.12; 14.20, 31; 17.7–8; 17.23.

111 Recall earlier comments by Johnson and Allison. Ben Witherington quips, “The demons were perfectly orthodox and perfectly lost” (Witherington, Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians, 476). He notes that in the case of the demons, “faith” clearly means, not trust in or active dependence on God, but rather “mere belief that God exists.”

112 Malcolm and Scott characterize the belief+ theory as follows: Faith that p requires (a) belief that p accompanied with (b) various non-doxastic attitudes, such as positive evaluations, affections like love, trust, or gratitude, and conative states like desires, preferences, and plans, towards the object of the belief (Malcolm and Scott, “Faith, Belief and Fictionalism,” 258).

113 See also Joshua Mugg, “In Defense of the Belief-Plus Model of Faith,” European Journal for Philosophy of Religion 8, no. 2 (2016): 202–206; Malcolm and Scott, “Faith, Belief and Fictionalism,” 259–269, who focus on propositional religious faith.

114 Howard-Snyder, “Propositional Faith,” 361. Cf. the three criticisms of a doxastic view of religious faith offered by Daniel J. McKaughan, “On the Value of Faith and Faithfulness,” International Journal for Philosophy of Religion 81 [2017]: 22–23: (1) There are a lot of other mental attitudes that could play the role of believing. We have seen that the proposed substitutes, e.g., acceptance and assumption, are scripturally insufficient for saving faith. (2) What makes faith valuable consists of behavioral responses. McKaughan's focus is solely on personal faith and its value, to the neglect of propositional faith. He never considers why propositional faith might also be valuable, for instance, by putting one in touch with the truth, with the way the world really is. The person who has true beliefs about God will be much better positioned to direct his behavior correctly. (3) In circumstances that are evidentially unfavorable, belief that p would be epistemically defective, so that faith could not play the role it needs to play to yield its values in those circumstances without epistemic defect. McKaughan merely opens here a different debate about whether faith that goes beyond the evidence can be epistemically justified, on which see Elizabeth Jackson, “Belief, Credence, and Faith,” Religious Studies 55 (2019): 153–168. McKaughan's third point serves as a nice segue to Reformed Epistemology, which promises to make faith epistemically rational and warranted even in evidentially unfavorable circumstances.

115 Daniel Howard-Snyder and Daniel J. McKaughan, “The Fellowship of the Ninth Hour: Christian Reflections on the Nature and the Value of Faith,” in T & T Clark Handbook of Analytic Theology, ed. James M. Arcadi and James T. Turner, Jr. (London: T & T Clark, 2021), 73–78.

116 Howard-Snyder and McKaughan, “Fellowship of the Ninth Hour,” 75.

117 Howard-Snyder and McKaughan, “Fellowship of the Ninth Hour,” 69.

118 Howard-Snyder and McKaughan, “Fellowship of the Ninth Hour,” 79.

119 Howard-Snyder and McKaughan, “Fellowship of the Ninth Hour,” 80.

120 See Jackson, “Nature and Rationality of Faith,” 77–78.

121 With respect to religious belief, Buchak sets up a matrix according to which faith may be either doxastic or non-doxastic and faith may be based on either truth-directed reasons or on non-truth-directed reasons (Buchak, “Reason and Faith,” 46). Since we have seen that biblical faith does imply belief, the non-doxastic axis falls out, and our alternatives are doxastic accounts involving truth-directed reasons alone or doxastic accounts that may allow non-truth-directed reasons as well.

122 Unless, that is, the pragmatic “encroaches” on the epistemic, raising or lowering the bar for what one is epistemically justified to believe. See Justin P. McBrayer, review of Pragmatic Encroachment, Religious Belief, and Practice, by Aaron Rizzieri, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, March 22, 2014, https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/pragmatic-encroachment-religious-belief-and-practice.

123 Jeffrey Jordan, “Pragmatic Arguments,” in A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 425–433.

124 Blaise Pascal, Pensées, ed. Louis Lafuma, trans. John Warrington, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1960), #343.

125 As emphasized by Michael Rota, Taking Pascal's Wager: Faith, Evidence and the Abundant Life (Downers Grove,: IVP Academic,

2016), 64–69.

126 William James, “The Will to Believe,” [1897] in The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Dover, 1959), 1–31. For a robust defense of James see John Bishop, “Faith as Doxastic Venture,” Religious Studies 38 (2002): 471–487.

127 Rota, Taking Pascal's Wager, 35–42; cf. 68.

128 Jackson, “Nature and Rationality of Faith,” 78. Note that Jackson speaks here only of truth-dependent arguments.

129 Thus Rota advises, “When setting up a decision matrix, the strategies are supposed to be actions that the decider can choose between, actions that are within our direct voluntary control. Belief in the existence of God isn't like that. What one can choose to do is to seek God, to pursue a relationship with God … the strategy of committing to God under discussion here does not necessarily include belief” (Taking Pascal's Wager, 30, 32).

130 Jackson notes that as with decision theory, on a belief-desire theory of rational action, how one ought to act is a function of an epistemic component (beliefs) and an axiological component (desires) (Elizabeth Jackson, “Belief, Faith, and Hope: On the Rationality of Long-Term Commitment,” Mind 130, no. 517 [2020]: 37). So if the epistemic component is in equilibrium, it is far from clear that one cannot choose to believe on axiological grounds.

131 Bishop, “Faith.” Such a model treats “faith as practical commitment beyond the evidence.” Cf. Bishop, “Faith as Doxastic Venture,” 471; John Bishop, Believing by Faith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 165. In Bishop's view, “the one who trusts already ventures, somehow beyond or independently of the available evidence, in his or her very believing that God exists and may be relied on for salvation” (“Faith,” §7). In order to qualify as a doxastic venture, it seems, faith must involve the attempt to believe, not just to undertake what Jackson calls acts of faith. Given that salvation hangs upon faith as belief+, the Gospel message requires a “response to options where what matters cannot be reduced to

whether one does or does not act on the assumption that p…, but amounts to a choice whether or not to accept – to accept believingly – what one is passionately motivated to believe" (Bishop, "Faith as Doxastic Venture," 481). I see no reason to agree with Andrei Buckareff that it is "conceptually troubling" that in a state of epistemic equilibrium the strength of one's consciously held belief would not be proportionate to the evidence of which one is aware ("Can Faith Be a Doxastic Venture?" Religious Studies 41, no. 4 [2005]: 440).

132 Pascal, Pensées, #343.

133 Alston recognized that acceptance could morph into genuine belief and that it would be difficult to draw a dividing line between them (Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith," 242).

134 Prominent contemporary proponents of such apologetic argumentation include Richard Swinburne and Stephen Davis.

135 A good example would be C. Stephen Evans, The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

136 See, e.g., Kevin Kinghorn and Jerry L. Walls, "The Spirit and the Bride Say, 'Come': Apologetics and the Witness of the Holy Spirit", in Testimony of the Spirit, 223–243.

137 William Lane Craig, Reasonable Faith, 3rd ed. rev. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 43–58.

138 Plantinga notes that sometimes propositions which are evident to the senses such as The sun is shining were also held to be believed in a properly basic way.

139 Alvin Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172.

140 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 173.

141 Alvin Plantinga, "A Defense of Religious Exclusivism," in Philosophy of Religion, 3rd ed., ed. Louis Pojman (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998), 529.

142 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 188–189.

143 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 190.

144 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 206.

145 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 261.

146 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 262.

147 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 285.

148 Neither does it hold for religions lacking a personal Designer, as argued by Tyler Dalton McNabb, “Warranted Religion: Answering Objections to Alvin Plantinga's Epistemology,” Religious Studies 51, no 4. (2015): 477–495.

149 Andrew Moon, “Recent Work in Reformed Epistemology,” Philosophy Compass 11, no. 12 (2016): 887.

150 See, e.g., Moon, “Recent Work in Reformed Epistemology,” 885–887; Tyler Dalton McNabb, Religious Epistemology, Cambridge Elements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1. Both agree that there is no non-skeptical theory of any epistemic property that would clearly preclude people's theistic belief from being properly basic with respect to that property.

151 I therefore prescind from consideration of objections to proper functionalism because proper functionalism is independent of the view (which I take to be alone biblically required) that Christian belief is properly basic with respect to warrant. But I cannot resist saying that the most important objection to proper functionalism, viz. the so-called Swampman objection, seems to me not at all compelling. According to that objection, we are invited to imagine that Swampman is created when a lightning strike rearranges the molecules in a swamp, producing an exact replica of the philosopher Donald Davidson. Swampman would know many things, such as that he has hands or that he is in a swamp. But, it is objected, he would not have a design plan, since nobody designed him. So we have a counterexample to the proper functionalist's claim that S

knows that p only if S's belief that p is formed by properly functioning faculties.

It seems to me that despite his accidental origin, Swampman does have a design plan if any of us do. For imagine instead that a Ford came into being from the lightning strike. Such a fully functioning automobile obviously has the same design plan as other Fords, despite its unusual, accidental origin. The objector seems to infer too quickly that coming into being by design is a necessary condition of having a design plan.

Andrew Moon expresses two worries about this response: (1) It seems to conflict with Plantinga's argument that an intelligent designer is necessary for proper function. (2) We are still left wondering in virtue of what Swampman (and the Swamp-Ford) would come to have a design plan. If it is not in virtue of being designed by an intelligent designer, then what is it? (Andrew Moon to William Lane Craig, March 3, 2021).

I remain unmoved. (1) An intelligent designer is, indeed, necessary for proper function, but not for the creation of a being which exhibits that design plan. Think of the evolution of human beings through a natural process of random mutation and natural selection. We are, in effect, protracted Swampmen. As advocates of Intelligent Design have emphasized in another context, divine intervention in the natural evolutionary process is not a necessary condition of intelligent design. (2) The Swamp-Ford's design plan is, indeed, to be explained by there being an intelligent designer of that plan, even if a thing “built” on such a plan originates fortuitously. Moon worries that if we say that the Swamp-Ford has a design plan because there exist other Fords that do have design plans (produced by designers), then we get the odd result that if those Fords never existed, Swamp-Ford would not have a design plan. The worry is, I think, misplaced. The Swamp-Ford has a design plan because a designer has actually conceived it, even if it has only one prototype.

For Plantinga's response to such objections, see Alvin Plantinga, “Warrant and Designing Agents: A Reply to James Taylor,”

Philosophical Studies 64, no. 2 (1991): 203–215; Alvin Plantinga, “Why We Need Proper Function, Noûs 27, no. 1 (1993): 66–82. For Moon's own response see Kenny Boyce and Andrew Moon, “In Defense of Proper Functionalism: Cognitive Science Takes on Swampman,” Synthèse 193 (2016): 2987–3001; see also McNabb, Religious Epistemology, 10–13.

152 Trent Dougherty and Chris Tweedt, “Religious Epistemology,” Philosophy Compass 10, no. 8 (2015): 556.

153 This assumption is important because even if there is objective evidence for p known to S, unless S believes p on the basis of this evidence, it will be irrelevant to S's epistemic status. Chris Tucker notes that the basing relation is, unfortunately, not well-understood. Epistemologists generally hold that in order for a belief to be based on another mental state it must be non-deviantly caused by that state. It is highly controversial, however, just what non-deviant causation amounts to and what further requirement, if any, should be imposed on the basing relation (Chris Tucker, “Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism in Religious Epistemology,” in Evidence and Religious Belief, ed. Kelly James Clark and Raymond J. VanArragon [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 74).

154 A defeater is in this case a belief that is incompatible with p and at least equal to p in warrant.

155 See William Tolhurst, “Seemings,” American Philosophical Quarterly 35, no. 3 (1998): 293–302; Blake McAllister, “Seemings as sui generis,” Synthèse 195 (2018): 3079–3096, who observes that “Such language is ubiquitous in contemporary epistemology” (3079).

156 Tolhurst, “Seemings,” 298–299.

157 Both examples from McAllister, “Seemings,” 3083.

158 Tucker, “Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism,” 63–64.

159 Tucker, “Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism,” 71 (my emphasis).

160 Tucker's response is essentially the same response that Plantinga gives to the Son of Great Pumpkin objection.

161 He writes, “[O]f course I believe that there is positive evidence – non-propositional evidence – for the existence of God, just as there is for external objects, other minds, and the past” (Alvin Plantinga, “Reply to Tooley's Opening Statement,” in Knowledge of God, by Alvin Plantinga and Michael Tooley (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 165).

162 Alvin Plantinga, “Reformed Epistemology,” in A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 676.

163 Alvin Plantinga, “Replies to my Commentators,” in Plantinga's “Warranted Christian Belief,” ed. Dieter Schönecker (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 238–239.

164 Thus, Swinburne, for example, complains that Plantinga “works up to the conclusion that ‘if Christian belief is true, it very likely does have a warrant'… . But this conditional is of little use to anyone without some information about the truth of the antecedent (whether Christian belief is true); and on that, Plantinga explicitly acknowledges in his final paragraph, he cannot help us” (Richard Swinburne, Faith and Reason, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 74–75). Cf. Richard Swinburne, “Evidentialism,” in A Companion to Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 687: “When, as Plantinga suggests, there is a special process in us which produces theistic and Christian beliefs, one couldn't check up on whether our beliefs are produced by this process (and so are reliable) without first establishing in some other (e.g., evidentialist) way that there probably is a God.”

165 Bishop, “Faith,” §§4, 5. According to internalism the justificational status of a belief is open to the reflective grasp of the subject. According to externalism the justificational status of a belief

need not be accessible to the subject but rather is dependent on its objective grounding.

166 Plantinga, “Replies to my Commentators,” 251; cf. 248–249.

167 Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 103. Alston argues that if sense perception is reliable, a track record argument will suffice to show that it is. But the argument will not do its job unless we are justified in accepting its premises, and that is the case only if sense perception is in fact reliable. We could just as well say of crystal ball gazing that if it is reliable, we can use it to show that it is reliable. We are left without a means of discriminating which sources of belief can be reasonably trusted (147–148). Practical rationality forces us to engage in doxastic practices, however, and in judging it to be practically rational to engage in the practice of sense perception, I thereby commit myself to the rationality of judging sense perception to be reliable. Alston claims that it is rational in the practical sense, not in the epistemic sense, to believe that sense perception is reliable (178–180). The same would apply to Christian experience (103, 143–145).

168 Andrew Moon, “Circular and Question-Begging Responses to Religious Disagreement and Debunking Arguments,” Philosophical Studies 178 (2021):785–809. Alternatively, Michael Bergmann maintains that not only one's Christian belief but also the higher-order belief that one's Christian belief was reliably formed could be a properly basic belief grounded by its seeming to be so. Piggy-backing on Tolhurst's characterization of seemings, Bergmann says, “when we consider a seeming that p, we become aware of its felt veridicality and this makes it seem to us that the seeming that p is veridical; on the basis of this higher-order seeming, we believe that the belief that p, based on that seeming that p, is formed in a reliable and nonmisleading way” (Michael Bergmann, “Religious Disagreement and Rational Demotion,” Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015], 6:39). More recently, Moon reports that not only is the view

that epistemic circularity does not disqualify a belief from being justified “ably defended by a large number of philosophers; it's probably the majority view” (Andrew Moon, “Global Debunking Arguments,” in Evolutionary Debunking Arguments: Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Mathematics, Metaphysics, and Epistemology, ed. Diego E. Machuca (New York: Routledge, 2023), 313).

169 See Joshua C. Thurow, “Debunking Arguments and Religious Belief,” in The Cambridge Handbook of Religious Epistemology, ed. Jonathan Fuqua, John Greco, and Tyler Dalton McNabb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 290–304. Debunking arguments, he explains, aim to undermine a belief based on epistemically problematic features of how the belief was originally formed or is currently held, thereby robbing the belief of some desired epistemic status, such as justification or warrant.

170 That there is such a thing as benign circularity, Moon claims, is evident from two facts: first, Michael Bergmann's point in Justification without Awareness (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 206, that we justifiedly believe that our cognitive faculties as a whole are generally reliable even though we used our cognitive faculties to come to this belief, and second, Plantinga's point in Warranted Christian Belief, 125, that not even God can know that his cognitive faculties are reliable without using those faculties and yet God's belief in the reliability of his own faculties is surely justified.

171 See Alvin Plantinga, “Reply to Beilby's Cohorts,” in Naturalism Defeated? Essays on Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism, ed. James Beilby (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 224. The distinction plays a crucial role in Plantinga's Evolutionary Argument against Naturalism. For a helpful discussion, which I follow here, see Andrew Moon, “Debunking Morality: Lessons from the EAAN Literature,” Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 98 (2017): 208–226.

172 Moon, “Circular and Question-Begging Responses,” 788.

173 Hannah could avoid circularity by presenting theistic arguments and Christian evidences in support of (I). But Plantinga lacks confidence in Christian evidences and so finds himself crucially reliant on the Spirit's witness. He explains, “Of course I do believe the Christian faith; indeed, I'd say, know that it is true… . But this knowledge is a matter of faith. And as far as I can see, there are no purely philosophical arguments sufficiently strong to undergird serious Christian belief” (Plantinga, “Replies to my Commentators,” 240).

174 Note that Moon distinguishes epistemic circularity from logical circularity. In general, S's argument for the conclusion that “Belief source X is reliable” is epistemically circular if S used X to come to believe in one of the premises of that argument. If S already has a defeater for believing that X is reliable, then S's using a deliverance of X as support for continuing to believe that X is reliable results in malignant circularity.

175 Moon, “Circular and Question-Begging Responses,” 795.

176 Moon emphasizes that the conditional here should be understood as an ordinary English indicative conditional, not a material conditional. There has to be some reason to think that the consequent actually follows from the antecedent, as in Hannah's case. Similarly, on Bergmann's view p is in a sense an epistemically self-promoting proposition, for the felt veridicality of p gives one reason for its seeming to be the case that the belief that p was reliably formed. But by “a reason,” Moon means a premise in an argument for the belief that p was reliably formed, whereas on Bergmann's view there is a seeming for the belief that p was reliably formed that is different from the seeming that p. Moon takes both approaches to be good ways of justifying the belief that one's belief that p was reliably formed (Andrew Moon to William Lane Craig, February 23, 2021).

177 For discussion and literature see Bergmann, “Religious Disagreement and Rational Demotion,” 21–57; Moon, “Circular and Question-Begging Responses,” 799–802.

178 Appealing to Plantinga's illustration of someone falsely accused of a crime but against whom the evidence decisively stands (infra, 300), Bergmann takes non-believers to be like the jurors whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly both “upstream” and “downstream” of their experience but who lack the seemings that ground the accused's memories that he did not commit the crime (Bergmann, “Religious Disagreement and Rational Demotion,” 34, 43n57, 47–48). The comparison is not entirely apt, however, for it ignores the noetic effects of sin. While the non-believer may not enjoy the inner witness of the Spirit, the Spirit is actively engaged in convicting him of sin and seeking to draw him to saving faith. The non-believer who resists the Spirit's work is on Plantinga's view cognitively dysfunctional.

179 William Alston, “Religious Diversity and Perceptual Knowledge of God,” Faith and Philosophy 5, no. 4 (1988): 442–43. Once more, we see the importance of distinguishing between knowing and showing one's Christian belief to be true.

180 See The Testimony of the Spirit, ed. Geivett and Moser, particularly “Introduction,” 1–22.

181 Geivett and Moser, “Introduction,” embrace this term but seem at first to mean no more than self-manifesting or self-revealing (10); but they later affirm, “God wants to be one's sole evidential foundation for believing in God and for believing that God exists, and hence no argument is to assume this foundational role. The evidential foundation, more precisely, is God in God's self-manifesting interventions through the Spirit in one's life” (12). Indeed, even in the face of ostensible defeaters, the Spirit's testimony can “stand on its own as a source of justified belief” (22).

182 Tucker, “Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism.” Although Tucker's discussion is framed in terms of the sensus divinitatis, I shall substitute the testimonium Spiritu Sancti internum as more scripturally adequate.

183 As pointed out by Blake McAllister and Trent Dougherty, “Reforming Reformed Epistemology: A New Take on the sensus divinitatis,” Religious Studies 55, no. 4 (2019): 541. McAllister and Dougherty follow Tucker in attributing to the proper functionalist a defective account of evidence, according to which a person's mental state evidentially supports a belief just in case that person's cognitive faculties are functioning properly in forming that belief on the basis of that mental state. I am dubious that proper functionalists, who traditionally deny that properly basic beliefs are based on evidence, subscribe to such an account. But they do hold that properly basic beliefs are grounded in such experiences, and so I have attempted to re-word the motivation for the proposed modification in such terms.

184 Plantinga, “Replies to my Commentators,” 238. See also Michael Bergmann's account of epistemic justification: S's belief B is justified iff S's cognitive faculties producing B are (a) functioning properly in response to all of S's mental states, (b) truth-aimed, and (c) reliable in the environments for which they were designed, and (ii) S does not take B to be defeated (Bergmann, “Religious Disagreement and Rational Demotion,” 31n27). Clause (a) incorporates seemings. Bergmann equates epistemic justification with internal rationality, rationality “downstream” of or in response to experience. Note the notion of internal rationality (“downstream” of experience) and external rationality (“upstream” of experience) must not be confused with internalism and externalism with respect to justification, and therefore I have avoided this potentially confusing terminology.

185 Geivett and Moser thus construe the witness of the Spirit as a sort of non-discursive evidence on behalf of Christian belief: “Paul's suggestion of the distinctive cognitive, or evidential, role of the Spirit's witness can clarify the nature of the Spirit's inner witness… . Given their experience of God's powerful agapē in their hearts, the Roman Christians had received inner evidence of God's reality and therefore they are not cognitively, or evidentially, disappointed” (“Introduction,” 6). McAllister and Dougherty note that one advantage

of Tucker's model “is that it contains a psychologically superior account of belief formation. Experience confirms that we usually do not just find ourselves with basic beliefs – beliefs not based on any other beliefs – rather we form a basic belief in something because it seems true” (“Reforming Reformed Epistemology,” 543).

186 Tucker, “Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism,” 69. Tucker presents his model, however, as a competitor to proper functionalism as an account of epistemic justification, even if one holds that proper function is necessary for knowledge. He admits that if the proper functionalist accepts that it is not beliefs but seemings which are wrought by the sensus divinitatis, he can avoid the counterintuitive claim that properly basic religious beliefs are supported by arbitrary experiences in the actual world. But, he insists, “The proper functionalist is still stuck with the counterintuitive consequence that the visual image of a sunset, by itself, could support the claim that God loves one” (Tucker, “Phenomenal Conservatism and Evidentialism,” 63).

It is difficult to see an insuperable problem here. Certainly, we can imagine a world in which God produces religious beliefs in persons' minds without seemings mediating between their experiences and their beliefs. But then in such worlds the relation between the experiences and the beliefs would not be an evidential one. Perhaps that world would be a fideistic world. There is no reason to think that the epistemic arrangement God has chosen for the actual world is broadly logically necessary. See the very apt remarks on this head by Kenneth Boyce (Internet Enyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. “Proper Functionalism,” by Kenneth Boyce, §2b https://iep.utm.edu/prop-fun/#SH2a. Tucker replies, “In a fideistic world in which subjects lack even experiential evidence that God exists, I say those subjects lack justification for the belief that God exists” and, hence, knowledge that God exists (Chris Tucker to William Lane Craig, February 15, 2021). Tucker assumes that proper functionalism, if true, is necessarily true and so must hold in the fideistic world, which he considers implausible. It is not clear to me that proper functionalists must think that their theory is not merely contingently true, so that in a fideistic

world theistic propositional beliefs must be justified. Perhaps in such worlds one believes without justification and so attains a knowledge of God by acquaintance. But suppose that proper functionalism, if true, does hold in every world. Then the proper functionalist might respond either (i) God may sovereignly choose a different design plan in another world, according to which beliefs formed without seemings are, pace Tucker, justified; or (ii) a world in which beliefs are formed without seemings is not broadly logically possible, given Plantinga's argument that if God existed he would want created persons to come to know him and so would provide the means by which they might form justified beliefs about him. Since God's character is essential to him, such a motivation obtains in every possible world. So there are no possible worlds such as Tucker imagines.

In any case, Tucker acknowledges that one “can still hold that something like PC captures an interesting generalization about justification given our design plan. If PC is understood in this way, it could be viewed as a helpful supplement rather than a competitor to PF… . Plantinga himself was sympathetic with PC as a contingent generalization grounded in our design plan” (Chris Tucker to William Lane Craig, February 15, 2021).

187 James D. G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit (London: SCM, 1970), 225; cf. Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit (London: SCM, 1975), 240.

188 Here, for example, is how they describe the formation of my basic belief that I am guilty before God:

“We undergo an experience with propositional content; for instance, it seems that you have violated a moral law. Through the sensus divinitatis we intuitively grasp a support relation between this experiential content, in conjunction with your background evidence, and a proposition about God; for instance, you tacitly perceive that violating a moral law implies that there is a moral law, that the existence of a moral law supports the existence of a moral lawmaker,

that the only plausible moral lawmaker is God, and, hence, that violating the moral law makes you guilty before God. The sensus divinitatis then produces a seeming with theistic content – e.g., that you are guilty before God – the strength of which corresponds to the probability of the supporting propositions and the strength of the perceived support relation" (McAllister and Dougherty, "Reforming Reformed Epistemology," 547).

This remarkable account would make the most uneducated theist a tacit natural theologian.

189 Cf. Bavinck's doctrine of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his §V. Faith (Principium Internum) of his Reformed Dogmatics, trans. John Vriend, ed. John Bolt, vol. 1, Prolegomena (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003). Bavinck distinguishes between the principium cognoscendi externum of Christian knowledge, which he identifies with God's revelation in Christ recorded in Scripture, and the principium cognoscendi internum, which he, apparently inconsistently, identifies both with the testimony of the Spirit (506) and with faith (565). Bavinck seems to flirt with the idea that the Holy Spirit is the organ by which saving faith is formed. He asserts that the functions of the human mind which people describe with the terms "intellect" and "reason," "heart" and "conscience," are not the sources but the organs of knowledge (504). But Bavinck thinks that "the 'internal principle' of the Christian religion and theology cannot be located in the intellect or reason, in the heart or the will of the 'natural' person" (563). He explains that just as the eye answers to light, so there has to be in human beings "a subjective organ that answers to the objective revelation of God" (505). One might think that this is the sensus divinitatis. But Bavinck thinks that that is not enough to answer to God's special revelation in Christ. "The external foundation (principium externum) of the Christian religion… is a special revelation of God in Christ. The internal principle (principium internum) must correspond to that external principle. The mind (νους) of the 'natural' person is not equipped to discern the things of

the Spirit of God. God can be known only through God” (587). Again, “By the Spirit we receive a fitting organ for the reception of external revelation. God can be known only by God; the light can be seen only in his light” (506). Objective revelation in Christ recorded in Scripture is the principium cognoscendi externum of Christian knowledge, and the Holy Spirit is the principium cognoscendi internum of Christian knowledge. How this is compatible with faith's being the principium cognoscendi internum is obscure (cf. 616).

190 John Greco, “Reformed Epistemology,” in Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Copan (London: Routledge, 2007), 637–638. Cf. the concern of virtue epistemologist Guy Axtell, “Blind Man's Bluff: The Basic Belief Apologetic as Anti-skeptical Stratagem,” Philosophical Studies 130 (2006): 131–152, that on Plantinga's model the Holy Spirit “is not a human faculty at all, but an outer instigator of the inner process of belief-acquisition” (139). Axtell champions instead a “responsibilist virtue epistemology” that emphasizes, not the properties of the belief, but rather the properties of the agent who forms the belief (142–143). Duncan Pritchard, “Reforming Reformed Epistemology,” International Philosophical Quarterly 43, no. 1 (2003): 43–66, thinks that Plantinga's model can be adapted to virtue epistemology by emphasizing the faculty virtues and reflective virtues of the agent, as opposed to the work of a benevolent demon.

191 Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 251. He adds, “This case … differs from the usual run of testimony, then, in that the Holy Spirit not only writes the letter (appropriately inspires the human authors) but also does something special to enable you to believe and appropriate its contents. So this testimony is not the usual run of testimony: it is testimony nonetheless.” For a construal of Plantinga's extended model in terms of testimony see also James Anderson, Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of its Presence, Character, and Epistemic Status, Paternoster Theological Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 181–189. On Anderson's construal the basic picture is as follows: (1) those natural faculties normally involved in the formation of testimonial beliefs are

also involved in the formation of Christian belief; (2) the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit is nevertheless essential for those beliefs to be formed at all (because of the noetic effects of sin) and with sufficient psychological firmness as to meet the conditions of knowledge, such that Christian faith may rightly be deemed a divine gift; and (3) all of this proceeds in accordance with a divine design plan and thus involves human cognitive faculties functioning properly (i.e., operating as intended), well-aimed at truth, and in a congenial epistemic environment (188). Such a picture should satisfy the requirement of human epistemic virtues demanded by virtue epistemologists like Linda Zagzebski, “Religious Knowledge,” in Rational Faith: Catholic Responses to Reformed Epistemology, ed. Linda Zagzebski (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 218–219.

192 Any doubts about Plantinga's being a fideist ought to have been laid permanently to rest by his lecture “Two Dozen (or so) Theistic Arguments,” 33rd Annual Philosophy Conference, Wheaton College, October 23–25, 1986, now published in Two Dozen (or so) Arguments for God: The Plantinga Project, ed. Jerry L. Walls and Trent Dougherty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

193 Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 83.

194 Plantinga, “Reason and Belief,” 84.

195 Plantinga, “Reason and Belief,” 84.

196 Plantinga, “Reason and Belief,” 84.

197 Plantinga, “Reason and Belief,” 84–85.

198 Plantinga, “Self-Profile,” in Alvin Plantinga, ed. James Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985) 59.

199 Plantinga, “Self-Profile,” 55.

200 Philip L. Quinn, “In Search of the Foundations of Theism,” Faith and Philosophy 2, no. 4 (1985): 481.

201 Alvin Plantinga, “The Foundations of Theism: A Reply,” Faith and Philosophy 3, no. 3 (1986): 312.

202 Moon, “Circular and Question-Begging Responses,” 798.

203 Moon, “Circular and Question-Begging Responses,” 798.

204 Tenses may be significant here. Moon articulates Hannah's belief as Hannah's Christian belief was formed reliably. I changed the verb to the present tense because it is easy to imagine that Hannah reflects that she first formed her Christian belief unreliably, say, as a child or out of conformity to a Christian subculture. But now she believes that her Christian belief is reliably formed. Moon qualifies his position by explaining, “What matters is not only how S formed his belief, but what is currently sustaining his belief” (Andrew Moon to William Lane Craig, November 19, 2020).

205 See discussion in this Systematic Philosophical Theology, Volume III: De homine: Man as Sinner.

206 See the extended treatment by Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, part 1: The Religious Experience of Jesus.

207 See discussion in this Systematic Philosophical Theology, Volume III: De homine: Man's Creation in the Image of God. Plantinga inconsistently portrays the sensus divinitatis both as operative today and as part of the narrow image of God which was destroyed, not merely damaged, in the fall (Plantinga, Warranted Christian Belief, 204–205).

208 I am grateful to Trent Dougherty, Elizabeth Jackson, Tyler McNabb, Andrew Moon, Teresa Morgan, Michael Rota, Richard Swinburne, and Chris Tucker for discussion of issues relevant to this locus.

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